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Merry Xmas to all our readers. Especially you. Yes, you.



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this magazine please recycle it.

Welcome



GAME OF THE MONTH

Fallout 4

BIGGEST 2015 REGRET

Not upgrading my PS4 hard
drive before P.T. was pulled

**"THIS ISSUE WE
UNVEIL A SHINY
NEW TROPHY
TO HONOUR THE
YEAR'S BIGGEST
SUCCESSSES."**

Here at OPM our Christmas magazine is
always one for reflection, and during
our lunches we've been passing time
by making a PlayStation naughty or nice list.

This issue alone contains enough to fill a
few sheets: David Cage's Detroit (p6), the
first Gran Turismo on PS4 (p11) and the
surprise release of Driveclub Bikes (p84)
all live under the nice header, while the
naughty column includes more than a couple
of big releases that, although entertaining,
really should have delivered a little more.

But we didn't stop at the list. We've
unveiled a shiny new trophy to honour the
biggest successes – and failures – of 2015
in our inaugural Awards Special. Long-time
readers needn't worry: we're still leaving
our Game Of The Year winner in your hands,
so turn to p57 for voting details.

As for 2016, it's already shaping up to be
the best 12 months in PlayStation's 20 year
history. You can find out why (and grab a
free 2016 calendar) next month from 18
Dec. From all of us here at OPM, enjoy the
issue and have a very merry Xmas.

Matthew Pellett

EDITOR

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@Pelloki

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your copy
of our 2016 mag +
calendar combo

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by 1 Dec

THIS MONTH'S LITTLE HELPERS ...



Ben Tyrer

STAFF WRITER

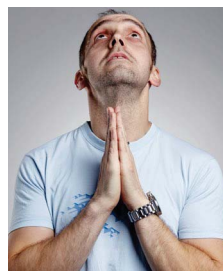
"Why is Call Of Duty the
perfect Xmas game?" "We
don't know Ben, why is it?"
"Because you always 'Stay
Frosty!'" "Merry P45mas."



Jen Simpkins

STAFF WRITER

Really pleased about being
younger than Day Of The
Tentacle (p14) are you,
Jingle Bells? Do enjoy your
Secret Santa lump of coal.



Milford Coppock

MANAGING ART EDITOR

As OPM's resident wise old
man, we all got Milf some
Xmas gifts. Ben chose gold.
Jen bought frankincense.
But wait, there's myrrh!



Andy Westbrook

PRODUCTION EDITOR

Andy campaigned all issue
to print over-running
text in the margins. Why?
"To give everyone an Xmas
mag with all the trimmings."

GAME OF THE MONTH

Call Of Duty: Black Ops III

BIGGEST 2015 REGRET

Switching on Tony Hawk's 5

GAME OF THE MONTH

Life Is Strange

BIGGEST 2015 REGRET

Killing Lisa in Life Is Strange

GAME OF THE MONTH

Fallout 4

BIGGEST 2015 REGRET

Not playing enough Towerfall

GAME OF THE MONTH

Yakuza 5

BIGGEST 2015 REGRET

Those SkyScrappers hours

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David Cage's much-loved android demo Kara is becoming a full game. We're oh-so-excited.

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Is it an FPS? Is it a MOBA? Is it downright bonkers and a whole lotta fun? Affirmative.

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From top shooter to toughest game, we've got 37 gongs for the best, and worst, of 2015.

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You've got your games sorted, but what other gear should make it onto your Santa wishlist?

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The shooter's back and our review contains three all-important words: "Return to form."

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072 ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE

Forget Unity people, London town's where it's at. Can the series reclaim its Black Flag highs?

REVIEW

088 FALLOUT 4

We had to defy our publishing overlords and sacrifice a writer to the wasteland to get it in this issue, but hey, that's just the way we roll.

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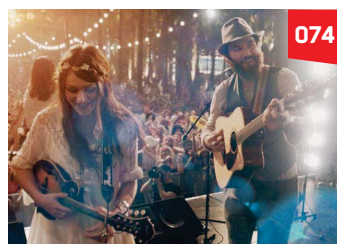
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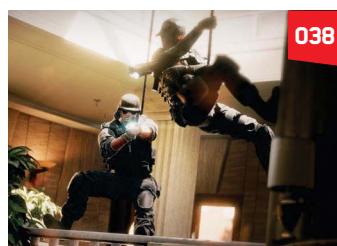
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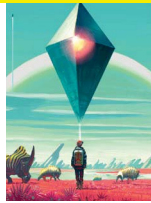
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A close-up, high-resolution portrait of Kara, an android character. She has short, light brown hair and striking blue eyes. Her face is wet, with numerous water droplets of varying sizes scattered across her forehead, cheeks, and nose. She has a serious, contemplative expression, looking directly at the camera. The lighting is soft and focused on her face, creating a sense of intimacy and highlighting the texture of her skin and the glistening water.

“ DETROIT STARS KARA, AN ANDROID
UNLIKE ANY OTHER: SHE *FEELS* THINGS,
AND WANTS TO BECOME HUMAN. ”

What's the story, Quantic Dream? The robot girl we fell for back in 2012 now has a game of her own.



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We round up Paris Games Week.

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Day Of The Tentacle is coming back!

The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

Why you should Kara 'bout David Cage's new game

Quantic Dream's demo saga continues as Detroit appears at Paris Games Week

01

When David "Plot Twist" Cage walked on stage at last month's Paris Games Week, nobody knew what to

expect. A new game? An unfamiliar concept? Untrodden ground? What a pleasant surprise, then, when the writer and director behind Heavy Rain revealed Detroit: Become Human – a game based on a tech demo from three years ago.

No, not the sorcerer one...

The announcement trailer stars Kara, an android unlike any other: she *feels* things, and she wants to become human. This might be tricky for our programmed protagonist, as she's living in a city where anthropomorphised robots like her are sold as nifty gadgets to humans with deep pockets.

That city is – you guessed it – Detroit. Kara's managed to escape her creators somehow, and is quick to learn The Motor City isn't all smiles and rainbows. Humans

and androids certainly don't seem like the best of pals, and the game looks set to explore these tensions – along with some colossal philosophical conundrums.

David Cage is one of a team of three writers/directors working on Quantum Dream's latest game. Although we're yet to see details about Detroit's gameplay, Cage's résumé (Fahrenheit, Heavy Rain and Beyond: Two Souls) suggests the game's main focus will be on a gripping interactive narrative.

In the Paris Games Week trailer, Kara emphasises the idea of choice. "Maybe I will change the world. Maybe I will choose a different path," she muses. "Now, it's up to me to decide." We'd bet our left thumbstick that Detroit will feature moral choice as a core mechanic.

RIVETING ROBOTS

Detroit's main character, however, isn't fresh off the assembly line. Kara was born in 2012, in Quantic Dream's eponymous tech demo. On stage for the reveal at Sony's PGW conference, Cage reminisced:





The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



CAGE WRITER

Can't wait to get your hands on David Cage's latest mindboggler? Heavy Rain and Beyond: Two Souls are coming soon to PS4 – both demos were playable at Paris Games Week. Press **X** to "Awesooooome!"

»

"I was just looking for a short story that would be a technical showcase to test different emotions in our engine. The short video was about an android named Kara, who felt emotions, and wanted to live." It features the exquisitely rendered facial expressions of actress Valorie Curry, and demonstrated the power of PS3 graphics. But it was the story behind Kara that set our hearts aflutter.

Slowly built by a machine, with only the mysterious voice of her creator to talk to, Kara becomes more and more self-aware in every second it takes to install her various components. First, we're impressed by the motion-capture. Then, we're charmed by the impossibly human-looking she-robot and her lust for life. Finally, we're horrified as her creator begins to disassemble his "faulty" handiwork before she even has time to blow out the candles on her birthday cake. Kara begs and pleads for her existence, which is eventually granted, and both we and the creator are left wondering about the mysterious cyborg.

CENTRE CAGE

Some 27 million views later, a "literally overwhelmed" David Cage knew he had some explaining to do. "Many people had the same question," Cage recalled in Paris.

"What happens to Kara when she leaves the factory? To tell the truth, I didn't know the answer myself, but I really wanted to find out."

Thank goodness, because we're intrigued. Perhaps she'll save her entire android race from a slavery in which they're forced to satisfy paying humans' every whim, riding in separate sections on public transport and standing in windows in an imitation of Amsterdam's girls. Perhaps she'll run, forsaking her kind in favour of becoming truly human, having a night in with the telly and a bar of chocolate like the rest of us. Who knows – perhaps it'll be up to us?

We do have another question for David Cage – why Detroit? The Frenchman was more than prepared for the query, preempting it in his presentation. He described wanting to set the game in "a city that would be meaningful to the story, a city with a history, and a future." Cage was "moved" by the Michigan city, which undoubtedly has a rich past. A one-time titan of manufacturing and innovation,



Detroit has been seriously suffering more recently, something that could be a key theme in Cage's narrative.

The city was home to Henry Ford's groundbreaking development of mass production, using assembly lines to construct his cars. It also played host to the Motown music scene, Martin Luther King's I Have A Dream speech and, er, Robocop... probably clues that we'll be experiencing race (well, android) relations, industrial innovation and social revolution in the game. Here's hoping it inherits some of its namesake's fighting spirit.

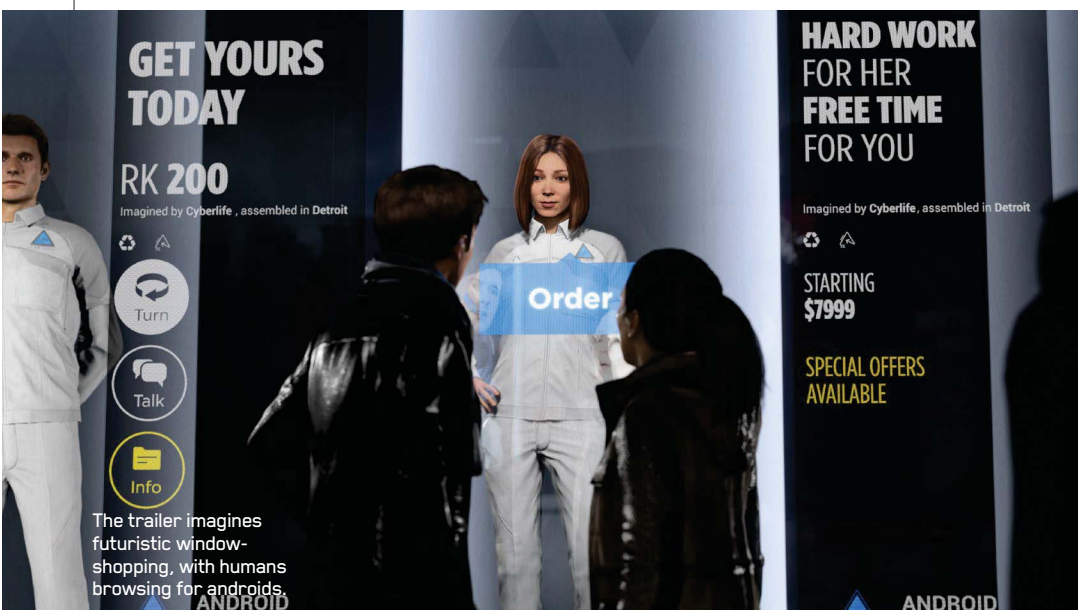
ONES AND HEROES

Cage had plenty to say about the spirit of the game, at least. "I was not interested in writing a story about technology, robots or AI," he said. "But I rather wanted to use androids to question our own humanity and ask a simple question: what does it mean to be human?"

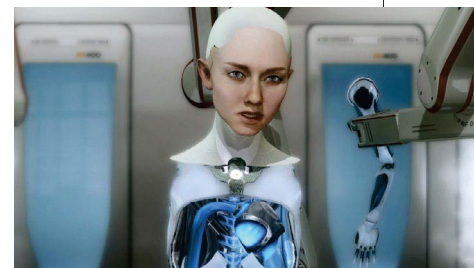
While plenty of films and TV shows since the Kara demo have asked that same question ("Be Right Back" from Charlie Brooker's Black Mirror, Ex Machina and Channel 4's robo-drama Humans), Detroit could differentiate itself from the factory line if it forces the player to provide an answer.

* There's no release date yet, so keep an eye out for info in future OPM issues.

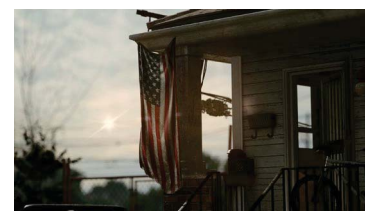
ANDROIDS ARE FORCED TO SATISFY EVERY WHIM, STANDING IN WINDOWS LIKE AMSTERDAM'S GIRLS.



The trailer imagines futuristic window-shopping, with humans browsing for androids.



Quantic Dream's tech demo, Kara, was the inspiration behind the game.



'Murica! The city of Detroit itself will play a significant role in the story.

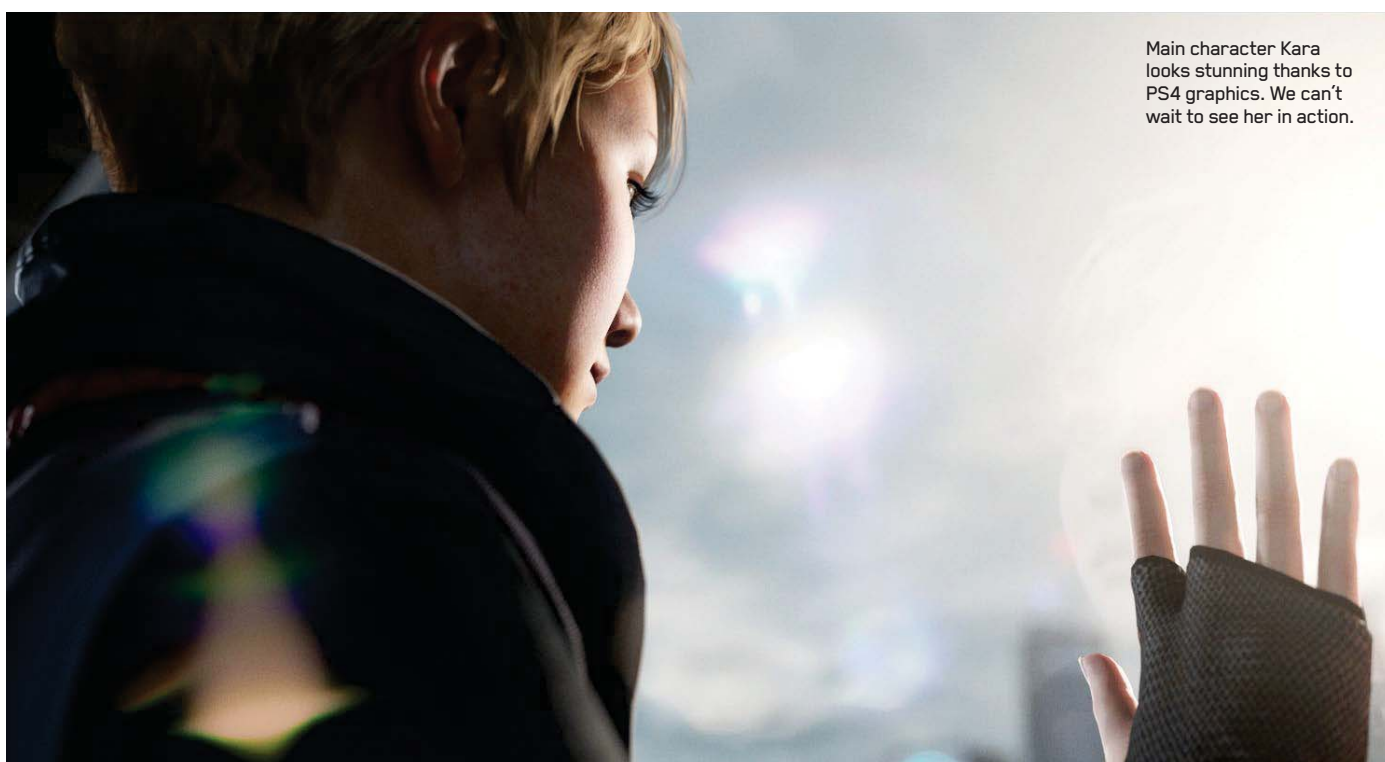


Detroit doesn't look too dissimilar to today's modern cities. No hovercars here, but plenty of billboards.



009

■ Depictions of android/human relationships reveal the political tone. Androids are treated like commodities, with some humans not too keen on them.



Main character Kara looks stunning thanks to PS4 graphics. We can't wait to see her in action.

Tekken 7 to PS4 isn't a surprise, but where the heck has Tekken X Street Fighter gone?



J'adore PS4 for Sony fans in Paris

Ooh là là! PlayStation's press conference flaunts future releases

02

Sony, you naughty little minx. We'll admit, we were a little disappointed when you were a no-show at

Gamescom this year – but little did we dream of the delights you had in store for us at Paris Games Week

2015. Big hitters confirmed, release dates revealed and surprise upon surprise. Phwoar. We could do with a cold shower.

First up, infinitely vast space adventure No Man's Sky will be coming to PlayStation 4 in June 2016. Some internet rumours tried to suggest Hello Games might stealth-release back on 27 October, at PGW, but lead developer Sean Murray soon ended those whispers.

TEKKEN WILL HAVE CONSOLE-EXCLUSIVE PS4 CONTENT.

At least, after all the speculation, you can scribble sweet NMS messages on June's page of the 2016 calendar we're giving away next issue.

Next, we knew it was in the works, but PlayStation veteran Tekken was confirmed as returning on PS4 for its seventh instalment, with Mr Tekken himself, Katsuhiro Harada, revealing it will feature console-exclusive content. Bizarrely, it'll also hit PlayStation VR.

There was more stunning fighting news thanks to Street Fighter V. It'll release on 16 Feb, and feature the return of Dhalsim, who's ready to spit some hot fire. Expect six more characters as DLC, paid for with in-game money.

But even fire-eaters tremble in the presence of dinosaurs, and new



exec talk

"Talking about moving from Gamescom to Paris: when we're doing our press conferences, we want to show off new things and have new announces. With E3 being a bit later and Gamescom earlier [this year] there wasn't really that much time between the events, so Paris made perfect sense."

Michael Denny
Vice-President, Sony
Worldwide Studios Europe

PlayStation VR game Robinson: The Journey, from Crysis studio Crytek, had us shaking with joy. Sadly, Horizon Zero Dawn's robo-dino gameplay was less exciting – don't get us wrong, it looks absolutely fantastic, but we'd seen the demo before for #113's cover story.

DRAKE SUPERIOR

Excited for Uncharted 4: A Thief's End's multiplayer? We've played it; it's fab. Mixing the usual shoot-'em-up action and pithy comebacks with supernatural power-ups, it's odder than you'd expect, too. The Nathan Drake Collection owners can test its Beta from 4 Dec, and we'll bring you our full write-up next issue.

Jaws remained firmly on floors after David Cage's new game Detroit (the one you read about on p6) and Gran Turismo Sport (see right) were both announced – big scoops for a



BUGATTI BE KIDDING ME

Vision Grand Turismo, the GT series' concept design project, has helped prototype a one-off Bugatti Veyron. It's part of Yamauchi's goal to "build the next 100 years of motorsport."

The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

Using VR technology, GT Sport will put you in the virtual driving seat for maximum authenticity.



Gran Turismo drifts onto PS4

The legendary series finally heads to current-gen

03

It's time to get very, very serious about motorsports. The granddaddy of realistic simulators is back, and boy

does it mean business. Sony's Paris Games Week presentation showed Gran Turismo Sport is creeping up on the inside lane, ready to lap its contemporaries and skid onto our screens in 2016.

Spring will bring Gran Turismo Sport's Beta, and with it, current-gen upgrades. Series creator Kazunori Yamauchi

spoke animatedly about the new instalment, of his team's aspiration to "change up" the series, and of "invoking the rebirth of motorsports." Nothing less than pole position for Yamauchi-san.

As if we needed any more praise heaped upon our best-selling baby, he went on to list the advantages of PS4 in building a truly authentic driving game. "As you'd expect with

the move to PlayStation 4," he explained, "the graphics, the physics engine and audio are all going to improve dramatically. It's certain to be the most realistic driving simulator of all the series to date."

Two flagship FIA championships will run throughout the course of the year in GT Sport. In the Nations Cup, track addicts will race for patriotic glory, while in the

Manufacturer's Fan Cup, you can represent your favourite car factory (no VW, alright?). And series champs will win more than bragging rights

– they'll be awarded prizes at an FIA ceremony in Paris, alongside racing giants such as Lewis Hamilton.

With its focus on eSports, and VR compatibility to come, we're looking forward to Gran Turismo Sport's immersive realism. Sorry, Yamauchi-san. We'll be serious.

Still seeking an adrenaline rush? Check out our Driveclub Bikes review on p84.

show of PGW's size. We nearly had to grab a cone when the tasty treats kept on coming – the creators of Resogun unveiled supersonic shooter MatterFall; animal-whispering, open-world RPG WILD showed us the way of the shaman; and there was, um, boundless enthusiasm for Boundless' mammoth Minecraftian ambition.

Scarier surprises came via Until Dawn: Rush of Blood, a VR jumpscare rollercoaster in which you zip about on rails, shooting anything that looks at you funny. We'll chase away the nightmares with sweet Dreams from Tearaway Unfolded studio, Media Molecule – or rest easy knowing that us PS4 owners will be the first to play the Battleborn Beta when it arrives in early 2016...

* We get up close and very personal with all these games next issue, out 18 Dec.

Time to master that body feint – your PES 2016 skills could earn you the big bucks.



Get set for PS Plus League

We give you the lowdown on PS4's upcoming eSports platform

012

04



1 NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Welcome to the PS Plus League! Sony's move into the world of eSports is made possible with the power of PS4. Forget driving five hours to tournaments: soon you'll be able to make yourself a cuppa, pop your feet up and kick some international butt from the plush refuge of your favourite armchair. Whether you're participating or watching from the sidelines, it makes sense to have it all play out on the best console there is.

2 MEMBERS ONLY

PS Plus League is VIP (that is, Very Important Players) only. If you still haven't talked yourself into a PS Plus subscription, you'll miss out. The competitive carousing is exclusive to subscribers, so bag yourself a party invite by signing up. Online multiplayer, discounts, free games every month and now the chance to get in on eSports action? It's a no-brainer.

3 LET'S DO LAUNCH

There's something for everyone in the League's launch game lineup. You've got nine titles supported, including footy favourites FIFA 16 and PES 2016, FPS Battlefield Hardline, fighters Mortal Kombat X and Ultra Street Fighter IV, and rubber-burners Driveclub, Project CARS and Trials Fusion. Not convinced

yet? Two words: Rocket. League. See you on the pitch, where we'll make you our... er, subordinate.

4 CHAMPIONES, CHAMPIONES

Each PS Plus League title will hold its very own championships, with seasons taking place throughout the year. A system of ranked, skill-based divisions will give gaming upstarts the opportunity to slowly but surely scramble their way to the top of the pile, while reigning champs jealously defend their PlayStation crowns.

5 JOY DIVISIONS

As a contender, you'll be sorted into either the Gold Division (if you're good enough at the game to make the Top 32), or the Silver Division (if you possess a DualShock, half a brain and some gumption). The Gold Division prize pool is currently €150, the Silver spoils smaller at €50. If you need a cash injection, you'll have to train hard: the top 11 Silvers are promoted at the end of each season, and the bottom 11 Golds relegated. Gulp.

6 TRIAL BY TYRE

But how will PS Plus League judge the silkiness of your skills? According to the Project CARS website, its divisions

will be created using data from trial races in placement tournaments. Your Street Fighter expertise probably won't be determined by a few laps around the speedway (at least we hope not), but there'll probably be similar trials.

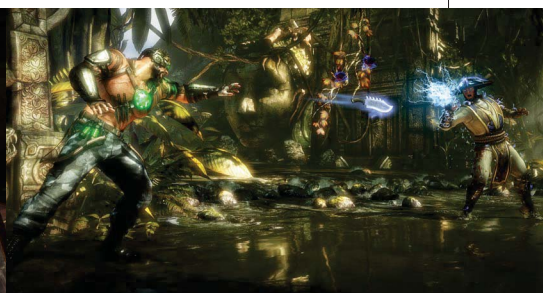
7 ON AGAIN, OFF AGAIN

Those of us with unreliable internet connections can breathe a sigh of relief knowing that high-stakes championships won't vanish with our Wi-Fi – League finales will be played online and offline. We at OPM predict some flashy PlayStation events for epic eSports showdowns, and plenty of cross-channel challengers using online to see what us Brits are made of.

8 CASH BANDICOOT

And yep, you heard correctly – PS Plus League could be paying you. Not only are those lovely Gold and Silver prize pools up for grabs each month, but the inaugural Paris Games Week finals dangled a €20,000 jackpot in front of competitors, suggesting there's gonna be fat stacks up for grabs in future. See, Mum? We told you all those FIFA hours would pay off!

* Will you be bringing the thunder? Tweet your League thoughts @OPM_UK.



■ BBC Three streamed the League Of Legends World Championships this year, so you might pop up on telly if you're one of PS Plus League's best. Hi, Mum!

COMPETITION

WIN!

A BB-8 DROID



To celebrate the release of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, we are giving readers the chance to win one of five BB-8 droids by Sphero.

With this gadget you can design a route for BB-8 and control from your smart device. You can also create and send holographic videos.

BB-8 will learn to recognise your voice, and adapt personality as you interact.

Who wouldn't want one?

All you have to do to be in with a chance of owning one of these remarkable gadgets is answer the following question:

WHAT EPISODE IS STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS?

A. VII

B. VI

C. IV

ENTER ONLINE NOW FOR FREE AT

www.futurecomps.co.uk/WIN-BB8

By taking part you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules. Open to UK and Republic of Ireland residents aged 18 and over. The closing date is 11:59pm on 31 December 2015 (GMT). Five winners drawn at random from the correct entries will be entitled to one BB-8 droid each. Specification may vary from pictured model. Only one entry per household; multiple entries will be disqualified. No cash equivalent. See www.futureplc.com/competition-rules for full terms and conditions.

Note: BB-8 is controlled by a smartphone app, which is available on Android and iOS. You are responsible for ensuring that BB-8 is compatible with your phone.



the big shot

eagle-eyed analysis

Another day for the Tentacle

First look at the remastered icon

05

Bow down to your new master, PlayStationers. The purple tentacle is

having another crack at taking over the planet, and this time, he'll be doing it in HD-o-vision. Not only that, he'll be getting help from original game directors Tim Schafer and Dave Grossman.

A remaster of the '90s point 'n' click adventure from the now-defunct LucasArts studio, Day Of The Tentacle places you in the

shoes of Bernard Bernoulli and his housemates, Laverne and Hoagie. With the aid of a time travelling toilet, they aim to put an end to the evil purple tentacle.

New to DOTT? Then know this: its puzzles are some of the best in the genre (hurling things into the bog to aid characters in the past or future never gets old), but it's the scalpel-sharp script that makes this an essential, hilarious experience, 23 years on.

★ Day Of The Tentacle Remastered is due early 2016 – more next month.

This isn't just any crap shack, it's a state-of-the-art Chron-O-John, for all your time travelling needs.

It's been confirmed that DOTT's predecessor Maniac Mansion will be fully playable during the game.

Members of the '90s development team will be providing a commentary track for the game.





number game

Star Wars maths

34.37m

The length of the Millennium Falcon, aka the vehicle you wish was yours.

1,379,319

The number of kills by Lord Vader's Force choke in the Battlefront Beta.

06

The number of playable hero and villain characters available in Battlefront.

1977

Why, it's the year that Star Wars gets its release and steals all our hearts.

17/12

When we'll see if The Force Awakens is A New Hope or a Phantom Menace.

01

The number of proton torpedo shots it takes to blow up a Death Star.

£104.98

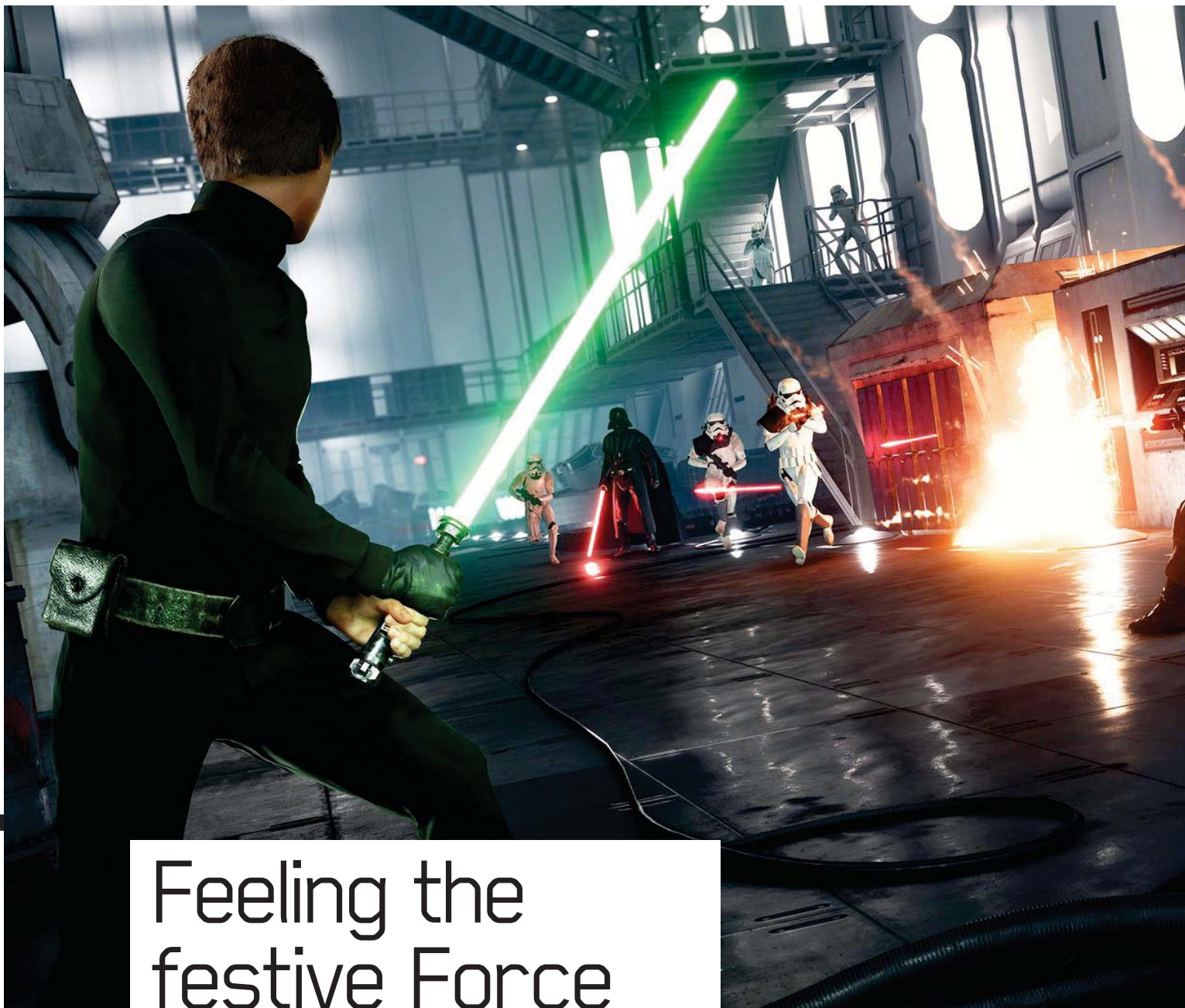
Yikes! The cash you'll need to fork out for PSN's Battlefront Ultimate Edition.

797

Minutes you would need to watch the theatrical cuts of Episodes I to VI.

Thanks to an unfortunate sip of sludge, Purple Tentacle gains a thirst for world domination.

Just like the Monkey Island remaster, you'll be able to switch between new and original visuals at any time.



Feeling the festive Force

No more wishing. No more waiting. Star Wars Battlefront is here

06

Humour us, and suspend the game for a sec – let's bask in the glory of this moment. Star Wars Battlefront

has landed, and we can finally be part of the Star Wars universe. Millions of us are holing ourselves up to play it like we're hunkering down on Dagobah. Learnt well from Master Yoda, we have.

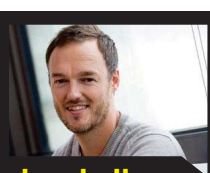
We've been hooked since the Beta blasted its way onto our consoles back in October – hooked to the tune of 1.6 billion minutes played, according to EA's data. And speaking of tunes, the initial buzz of Battlefront's sound design hasn't worn off one bit. Charging through

REPPING THE REBELS OR IMPERIAL ARMY IS FINALLY A TOUGH CHOICE.

Tatooine to the Star Wars theme, or scything down Rebel scum to that sexiest of Sith soundtracks, the Imperial March. Can it be beaten? Only by the triumphant sound of your blaster rifle pew-pew-pewing its way through online adversaries.

At more than 9.5 million total Beta players (the biggest in EA's history), there were plenty of rivals to bury in Hoth's snowdrifts – even the occasional Vader. And the Hero/Villain death toll is on the rise: Han Solo, Princess Leia

and Emperor Palpatine have joined the fray. Players who pre-ordered Battlefront, of course, will be enjoying the kind of cushy privileges that Jabba would salivate over. Don't get ahead of yourself, there's not a



dev talk

"The hardest thing to do is actually transform the magic of Star Wars onto something that is a very different experience, a game. We have to think... how can we make it easier for anyone to enjoy the game, but make it deep and rewarding for the people who want a shooter experience?"

Patrick Bach
General manager, DICE

golden bikini in sight, but look forward to being the first to see blood on the sand – you'll get early access to the desert planet of Jakku on 1 December.

Picking up its season pass gets you 'new content' two weeks before the rest of the galaxy, along with new player actions, more weaponry and a Shoot First emote. Still got room in the boot of your X-wing? Try cramming in some "new universes." Yep – EA's including whole new cosmoses with the four expansion packs releasing to DLC VIPs over the coming months. We're skeptical about this loose description, but anticipate Battlefield-style add-ons.

À LA MODE

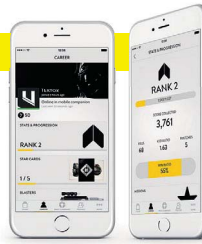
But Battlefront is far from an exclusive experience. *Everyone* is getting involved in the shooter's new modes. Hero Hunt is pure, saber-

The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

CASH OR CREDITS?

There's more! Battlefront's Base Command app sees you defending hideouts from the Empire. No microtransactions – it's all done with Galactic Credits earned in-game.



Taking down Darth Vader in Hero Battles isn't easy, but it nets you plenty more points.

soaked fantasy fulfilment. Spawning as a lone Hero in front of an unfriendly looking bunch of seven Stormtrooper players is intimidating, at least until you remember you've got the most elegant weapon in the star system. The three-on-three intensity of Heroes vs Villains provides terse, tactical thrills once you've stopped immediately launching yourself at Luke in favour of first taking out supportive Leia. The tug-of-war attack and defence in Capture The Flag – whoops, we mean Cargo – makes for frantic fun, as you can grab the opposition's cargo without worrying about yours.

Battles mode condenses the action into a more personal experience. It's tremendously satisfying to gather kill tokens, playing either with or against your mates in 1v1 or co-op, and Hero Battles means the collect-a-thon



■ Hunting Millennium Falcons? Join other players and attack from behind.

turns into a game of Hungry Hungry Han Solo. If that doesn't tickle your funnybone, Droid Run introduces even more levity: six-a-side teams chasing adorable little GNK droids around Wampa caves should really be set to the Benny Hill theme.

HAVING A BLASTER

For now, we'll amuse ourselves in dogfighting dreamland. Fighter Squadron mode gives the gift of bearing down on terrified TIE fighters in the gargantuan Millennium Falcon, or activating the jammer and flipping open the missile hatches on Boba Fett's Slave I to deliver a heaping helping of hurt.

Repping the Rebel Alliance or the Imperial Army is finally a tough choice, thanks to much-needed tweaks. You need no longer fear for your stats when playing for the Rebels: spawning behind the other team is a thing of the Beta's past, and a few weapons and Star Cards are slightly less... enthusiastic in the final game. There is, however, no danger of PS4 owners' passion fading just yet: Battlefront's hip-shooting charm is bang on target. Alright, now you can return.

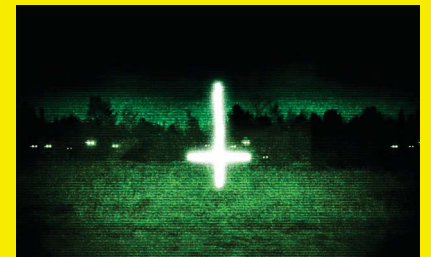
★ Visit our Facebook page for OPM's early judgement ahead of next issue's review.



■ Han Solo is an aggressive and mobile gunslinger. We love him. He knows.

info patches

update your brain



OUTLAST! A SEQUEL!

Start dreading the arrival of autumn 2016 – developer Red Barrels is launching Outlast 2. The sequel to the indie horror hit will be “a new twisted journey” into the human psyche, featuring a fresh cast and setting. By the looks of the trailer, those creepy night vision camera bits will be coming back. *shudder*



HOPOCALYPSE NOW

There's nothing like a dry desert Wasteland to make you thirsty for a cold one. Survivors rejoice, Fallout Beer is now available to nurse you through those long nights in the bunker. Not a drinker? Then blue, irradiated fizz Nuka-Cola Quantum is the beverage for you (but you'll have to nip over to America to buy it).



CATALYST AND MOUSE

We just can't seem to catch up with freerunner Faith. Mirror's Edge Catalyst has been delayed from February to May 2016, with senior producer Sara Jansson explaining the extra months of development time will be used to work on the City of Glass' open world. Don't be too long, DICE, we've got itchy feet.

Santa Sony brings PS price plummet

Bundles galore for Christmas rush

07

The tinsel, tree and cards might be up (well, almost), but Uncle Sony has made sure the price is down if

you're yet to jump on the good ship PlayStation 4. Along with the brand new 1TB model that's now in stores, the original 500GB edition has got an official price drop to a (relatively) wallet-friendly £299.99. No more harvesting organs to afford it.

The price drop means there's never been a better, cheaper selection of bundles and designs to choose from. Whether you fancy reliving the jungle-bothering exploits of Uncharted, testing your digital football prowess in FIFA 16's moreish Ultimate Team, co-ordinating the perfect raid in Destiny: The Taken King, or seeing how accurately Ubisoft captures the grotty lanes of London, each of those games are available in bundles currently in the region of £284.99 to £299.99.

And while the official RRP for the 500GB on its own is £299.99, we've already spotted PS4s as low as £249.99...

HEY, BIG SPENDER

Don't be too surprised should Black Friday see retailers follow suit from last year and push those prices down even further, or throw an extra game or two into the mix.

If you're willing to splash just a bit more cash, there are also a few special consoles that might tempt you back to organ harvesting. The Battlefield 1TB model has a lovely

image of Lord Vader, as well as an exclusively designed controller, for £349.99. If you're hearing the Call Of Duty, then Black Ops III also has a very orange special edition at the same price. Whatever your budget, there's no excuse not to be waking up with Sony's box o' magic under the tree come 25 December.

* Looking for a new PS4 this Xmas? Keep an eye on @OPM_UK for deal updates.

👉 THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER, CHEAPER SELECTION OF BUNDLES. 👉



If you're not fussed about the 1TB model, there are incredible deals to be had for the 500GB PS4.

the rumour machine

our sources understand...



Despite confirmation that Metal Gear Online studio Konami LA has been closed, whispers abound from Konami HQ that a new MGS title is already being planned.



A leaked survey suggests the max Party number on PS4 may well increase.

Red Fly Studios wants to resurrect its canned Darth Maul game, and is working on a PS4 demo.



Could there be a new Valkyria Chronicles in the works? Quite possibly. Sega has got it trademarked.



Fashionable PS fans rejoice – sources suggest the PS4 could be about to see custom backgrounds.



HOMEWARD HOUND

You'll have to be streetwise if you want to be top dog. Seeking out reliable food sources and forging alliances with other animals will be instrumental in making your way back to your master.



Not a lone wolf? Let loose with your poochy pals in multiplayer mode Dog Park.

Forget D-Dog – it's time to *be* dog

Home Free is bringing paws galore to PS4

08

Videogames are going to the dogs. Man's best friend, it seems, is no longer content with a supporting

role. In open-world action RPG Home Free, you play a loyal mutt, abandoned in the city. Walkthroughs won't help you now – you're lost in your own personal (black) labyrinth.

The roguelike (or should that be dogelike?) smashed its Kickstarter

goal in five days, and releases on PS4 at the tail end of 2016. In the game, surviving and thriving is key: dodge traffic, pilfer pizza and navigate treacherous territory on your mission to find your home.

Your unique, randomly generated city is intimidating, but it's also doggone fun. Sure, you're a fish out of water, a wee pup in a human world – but look! Mud puddles to roll in! Butts to sniff! SQUIRRELS!

With gameplay influenced by PS2's Dog's Life, and environments recalling the neon pulse of Jet Set Radio's Tokyo-to, Home Free exudes PlayStation panache. Developer Kevin Cancienne is gushing over the PS4 build, and we've heard intriguing potential developments on the canine grapewhine. New city areas, kitty NPCs, playable breeds with comically tiny legs... hounds like a whole lotta fun. We'll stop now.



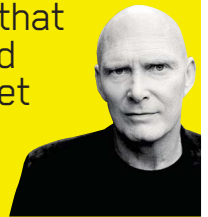
Mark Robinson's exuberant OST groove sets the tone for your city scamperings.

★ Still craving canine companionship? Flick to p88 for our Fallout 4 review.

PlayStation voices

the month in mouthing off

"Deeply touched and very humbled." Agent 47 voice actor **David Bateson** on the Hitman fanbase push that helped him get the job back.



"[It] makes no f*cking sense at all that that game is not happening." **Guillermo Del Toro** is furious about Konami killing off Silent Hills. So are we.



"Yes, we liked it very much! I should have tried super hot." **Shuhei Yoshida** on his cheeky Nando's – sounds like he's going back for more.





instant opinion

strong vs wrong

BEAR NECESSITIES

Wild thing, you make our hearts sing! There was some striking shaman gameplay on show in WiLD at Paris Games Week. We want it now.

WHAT A CHUNNER

Mad Catz has opened pre-orders for its limited-edition Chun-Li Street Fighter V fightstick. It features premium Sanwa Denshi components and Chun-Li's power knee.

MONSTER MASHUP

The Resident Evil Origins Collection hits PS4 on 29 Jan, and Capcom has revealed an all-new 'Wesker Mode' for Resident Evil O HD.

SKY STAKES

We're sad that No Man's Sky didn't stealth-release on 27 Oct as rumoured, but Sean Murray says Hello Games is "incredibly hard at work" and only has "one shot" at the game.

FLUBSTEP

Swedish DJ Avicii is working on a rhythm-action game with Hello There. Called Vector, it looks, well, *fine* – but we can't say we're huge fans of his floorfillers.

MISSAN THE POINT

Nissan is planning to turn one of its cars into a controller... for PES 2016. It'll let you "steer your favourite players" – but not virtual cars, apparently. Er, what?

The Witcher 3 stormed the Golden Joysticks, taking five top awards including Ultimate Game.



Witcher dominates Golden Joysticks

Bloodborne and GTA also star at *your* awards

09

It seems plenty of people *really* love Geralt and his unicorn sexy times, as his adventure is now swimming in Golden Joystick trophies, the awards voted for by the gamers. Held on 30 October in London, The Witcher 3 was its big winner, bagging gongs for Best Storytelling, Visual Design, Gaming Moment and the Ultimate Game Of The Year. CD Projekt Red added to the haul with Best Studio.

PlayStation's stellar year also kept pace at last month's ceremony, with plenty of games on our console getting the

YOUR MOST WANTED? ANYONE NOT EXPECT FALLOUT 4?

recognition they deserve. Rockstar's open-world murder-a-thon GTA V wasn't far behind The Witcher when Trevor and co picked up the Playfire Most Played award, the Best Innovation award – for chucking an FPS mode into its re-release – and also the Best Multiplayer gong.

Everyone's favourite Gothic monster hunt Bloodborne got its own hunter's dream by earning Best Original Game and Best PlayStation Game. MGS V, meanwhile, might be more divisive than we'd expected,

but Venom Snake's outing still escaped with the Critic's Choice award.

OPM favourite Life Is Strange disappointingly landed as just

runners-up a few times, though Ashley Burch – who you'll remember as the superb Tiny Tina from Borderlands 2 – did get her hands on the Best Gaming Performance for her role as Chloe. And how about your Most Wanted Game? Did anyone *not* expect it to be Fallout 4? Now head on over to p88 to read our review and see if it delivers.



Despite it kicking our arses, we still can't get enough of Bloodborne.

★ What are OPM's top gaming moments of 2015? Find all the answers on p50.



BET YOUR BOOTS

Online bookies are so convinced that FIFA 16 will slide-tackle into the number one spot this Christmas they've slapped 2/5 odds on it. Their thoughts on Battlefront coming top? No DICE!

The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

10

just one more question...
the team debate this month's burning issue

Which PlayStation game will you be playing on Christmas Day?



MATTHEW PELLETT
EDITOR



THERE'S NO NEED TO PRAY FOR A WHITE CHRISTMAS - STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT BRINGS IT ON HOTH.

Sure, people might intend to play something retro or snuggle up under a blanket while cradling eggnog and PS Vita, but be honest: who's going to resist the (Force) pull of Star Wars Battlefront this Xmas? With The Force Awakens barely a week old in cinemas, it's all anyone will be playing on PS4. And too right - it's the perfect Christmas game. Fluffy white snow banks on Hoth; memories of Yuletides past watching A New Hope thanks to that iconic music; terrible gags about Vader feeling your presents... Anyone booting up their PS4 to play something else on Christmas morning will be making a wookiee error. ■



ANDREW WESTBROOK
PRODUCTION EDITOR



MOVE OVER BABY JESUS, CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR SIBLING RIVALRY.

Forget the pun-riddled jumpers, Waitrose ads and socially acceptable pre-lunch drinking. For me, Christmas is all about family. And by family, I mean rekindling the decades-old rivalry with my brother, in which the only thing that matters is total, crushing victory. For this annual, epic battle, it's only fitting that we go old-school, so we'll be heading back to the '90s and PS1's button-smashing masterclass, International Track & Field. From the 100m to the long jump, athletics is the purest test of sporting ability. Likewise, repeatedly mashing buttons is the surest way to find the superior brother. Bring it! ■



JEN SIMPKINS
STAFF WRITER



GTA V'S SANDBOX IS A GIFT FOR LIFE, NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS.

My Christmas list hasn't changed since I was an *even littler* girlie. I'm still a spoilt brat who wants to get her sticky paws on as many treats as possible - hence why I'm *finally* ripping the plastic from GTA V this Noël. Christmas is all about overindulgence, and the latest instalment of everybody's favourite douche-'em-up is the bountiful, open-world gift that keeps on giving. Tons of new in-game swag, heists, Freemode Events... you name it, Rockstar crams it down the proverbial patching chimney. Christmas all year round for me. Move over Queenie - I need the screen space to make the Yuletide craaaay. ■



BEN TYRER
STAFF WRITER



LIKE ANY SMART WASTELANDER, I'VE GOT MY PLAN, AND BACKUP, FOR THIS CHRISTMAS.

Nothing says Christmas like tuning out loved ones and getting lost in a post-apocalyptic hellscape, so that's why I'm hoping that when Jesus' birthday hits, I'll be praying the day's spent rummaging among bombed crates in the hope of a few laser rounds in Fallout 4. However, because I'll be spending it with the better half's family, that might be a tad too anti-social and, unlike in Fallout 4, casual murder isn't a viable option... Good job I've already got my backup with Super Meat Boy! on PS Vita, in case the '50s apocalypse isn't deemed worthier than Christmas telly. ■

REPLIES

F facebook.com/OfficialPlayStationMagazine T @OPM_UK W gamesradar.com/opm E opm@futurenet.com



#116 Star Wars Battlefront, The Force Awakens and TGS 2015.

■ This isn't the end

There seems to be a new trend with games having compulsory DLC for story content. For example, both Dragon Age and The Evil Within's true endings are hidden behind DLC paywalls. It's awful that we buy a game at £50 and to actually complete the story we then have to pay a further £15 in DLC. I miss the days when, if you bought a game, you got all its content and DLC was something different. Bugs aren't the only way devs are not completing games at launch.

Jermaine Odelli via email

No game should conclude its story with

DLC. It's been happening longer than you think, though: remember 2008's Prince Of Persia and the 'Epilogue' DLC? And don't get us started on 'missing chapter' DLC either. Just... no. Stop it.

■ Shock and gore

Violence in computer games is a very common discussion, but I was pleased to see new writer Jen tackle it from a different angle. Her argument that the focus

on realism has sterilised it was an interesting one. However, I'm not sure a move to stylisation is the answer. I don't think I'd be more moved by a Splatterhouse or Mortal Kombat-esque blood fest than the creepy blood-on-the-walls of many survival horrors. The real issue is that so many games take themselves so seriously. The ability to make games closer and closer to reality has led to developers being more interested in being serious than fun. That's why gore has become po-faced. What's needed is more creativity and less focus on reality. Very impressed with the new team though - keep up the good work.

Martyn Scott via email

Your opinions are more aligned than you think. Jen would be over the Moon to see a zany AC entry that went full-on musical and dumped the serious tone. Well, Ubi?

■ I MISS THE DAYS WHEN, IF YOU BOUGHT A GAME, YOU GOT ALL ITS CONTENT AND THE DLC WAS SOMETHING EXTRA. ■■

■ Star letter

20 Years Of Joy
So what's this all about, then? It's simple: this is an OPM 20th birthday card. The card just happens to weigh 1kg and is made up of old PlayStations & controllers...

Richard Darling Scotland

Thanks Richard. Apart from the brief "should we call the bomb squad" unpacking moment, we absolutely love it. A free subscription is yours.



Our 20th anniversary art now hangs in OPM Towers.

■ The First Of Plus

I wrote to you two months ago to highlight that you do not cover PS Plus download titles enough. Last month you replaced Meiks with a PS Plus column. Why do I not get a shout out and a free sub?

Martin Sampson via email

Those plans had been in the pipeline for months - we just needed to bide our time before knocking Meiks out with a frying pan and quietly bundling him out of the building...



CAN I GET A RT?

Tweet gold (and one troll) from this month's @OPM_UK timeline



@MAGIKOOPA24

It takes place in Detroit. Has cyborgs. Cage, are you trying to make female Robocop? I like that.



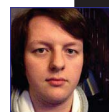
@EGOISTICSPARK

CAGE! YOU LEAVE DETROIT ALONE! THEY DON'T DESERVE YOU!



@VR_SAM

Call me old fashioned but when I buy a game, I want to pay money, get game & be able to play it.



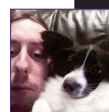
@KAMSAGE

"It's the Animus" - Ubisoft's way of declaring Assassin's Creed's bugs as 'features'.



@DYLANSPROUSE

Only 8 more days till #Fallout4 and I'm already closing my blinds and alienating my friends.



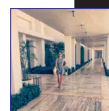
@CHRISBRETT1980

It's official: Guitar Hero is the best game I have bought this year.



@ADAMTALBOT

Fully grown man reading a PlayStation magazine on the train. Have a word with yourself, mate.



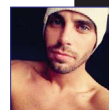
@LEEANNBELLA

Just got ID'd for buying the PlayStation magazine... Brilliant.



@301HUUR

If they put a Crash Bandicoot Collection on the store I will buy it without any hesitation.



@AKENT1985

Praying for a PS4 revamp of Syphon Filter one day.

TROLL OF THE MONTH

"Was going to get this but the story mode is so annoying and the actors... I just want to punch them. I'll stick to Driveclub."

MICK BARMBY ISN'T A FAN OF NEED FOR SPEED'S 'RAD' SUPPORTING CAST.



"It better have every single character to date, plus bosses."

WAYNE GARRETT'S TEKKEN 7 HOPE.



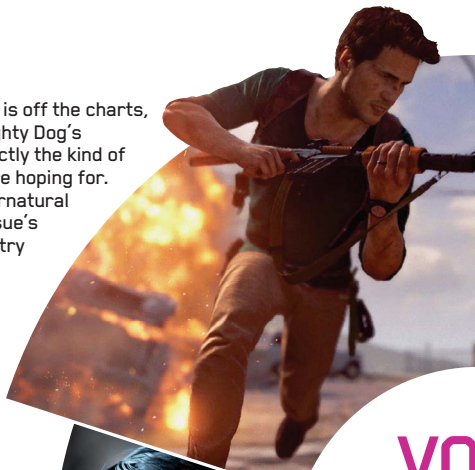
READERS' MOST WANTED

Which games are bleeping loudest on your radar?

1/ Uncharted 4: A Thief's End

Your Uncharted 4 hype is off the charts, and little wonder: Naughty Dog's multiplayer Beta is exactly the kind of fresh madness we were hoping for. Read all about its supernatural shenanigans in next issue's hands-on report – and try not to think about that tantalisingly close release date...

FORMAT PS4
ETA 18 MAR



2/ Detroit

If there's one thing we can all agree on, it's that David Cage's games get everyone talking. Everything there is to know about Detroit so far is over on p6, where we take apart Quantic Dreams' announcement trailer and its mechanical protagonist.

FORMAT PS4
ETA 2016



VOTE NOW!

Tell us the five games you can't wait to play at opm@futurenet.com.

5/ Persona 5

Like hanging on for the school bell at the end of the day, the wait for Atlus' JRPG is one of agonised anticipation. We know it'll be emotional, we know it'll be fantastical – we just don't know exactly when term will begin.

FORMAT PS4/PS3
ETA 2016



3/ No Man's Sky

It's no longer pie in the sky. You've got a solid ETA, an exquisite new trailer, and the thought of all that procedurally generated goodness to keep you warm at night. What more could you want? The *actual game*? Fair enough.

FORMAT PS4
ETA JUNE 2016



4/ Far Cry Primal

You covet Far Cry Primal like a caveman craves mammoth burgers. Playing as prehistoric hunter Takkar looks like it'll be as tough as talons, but it won't be without its explosive advantages. Flip forward to p41 to check out our preview.

FORMAT PS4
ETA 23 FEB



?

EXIT POLL

Our Facebook fans answer a final question

What game will be keeping you busy the morning after Santa visits this year?

15% Will be having a white Christmas on Hoth with Star Wars Battlefront.

8% Would rather Santa skipped the chimney and burst through the wall with Rainbow Six Siege.

46%

Want to nuke the sprouts and relax in Fallout 4's wasteland.

13% Are going to spray giblets everywhere with Call Of Duty: Black Ops III.

9% Of you will carve the turkey with hidden blades in AC Syndicate.

9% Aim to drown out cracker pulls with explosions in Just Cause 3.

NEXT MONTH

PlayStation VR hits PS4 in 2016, so we want to know the one game you can't wait to experience in virtual reality.

Ben Griffin

THE CLINICALLY BARE AESTHETIC OF MY FLAT HAS OFTEN BEEN LIKENED TO THAT OF A SERIAL KILLER, BUT NO LONGER.

Why I'm enjoying Lego Dimensions more than MGS V

Hello, I am 26. Since starting to play the inner-kid-inducing Lego Dimensions, this number has been rendered so completely arbitrary that I might as well open with something like, "Hello, I am pineapple." As everyone past puberty sneaks around Afghanistan as Metal Gear Solid V's Big Boss, I'm sitting on my bed busily assembling Marty McFly's hoverboard.

To play Lego Dimensions is to rediscover the childlike wonder and creativity that the tag-team of Father Time and Mother Nature had seemingly hidden behind tired eyes and sagging skin. I wondered, for example, what Wonder Woman would look like with Gandalf's beard, so I used my *creativity* to put his head on her body. What? It's not weird.

The Toy Pad doesn't recognise this horrific creation, though. All it needs to scan each figure, vehicle or item into the game is its requisite microchip-embedded blue base. But where's the fun in that? This hands-on quality sets Dimensions apart from other toys-to-life games.

Like Skylanders and Disney Infinity, Dimensions is about purchasing packs of characters and bringing them to life on screen. With the Gary Oldman-voiced Lord Vortech pilfering the universes of DC, Lord Of The Rings, The Lego Movie



WRITER BIO

Ben Griffin thought adults who collected toys were nerds until he started collecting toys. He now questions everything he's ever known. Maybe Sonic doesn't suck? Maybe he should give Dynasty Warriors a go? Please donate to his Kickstarter so he can afford more Lego.

and more, it's your financial duty to dig deep into your pockets and save everyone from a fate worse than co-branding. Before this, the last time I picked up a Lego brick was about 15 years ago, when it got lodged in my foot. I'm now seriously considering shelling out £28 for the upcoming Doctor Who pack featuring a doctor, phonebox thing and dog. I don't even like Doctor Who!

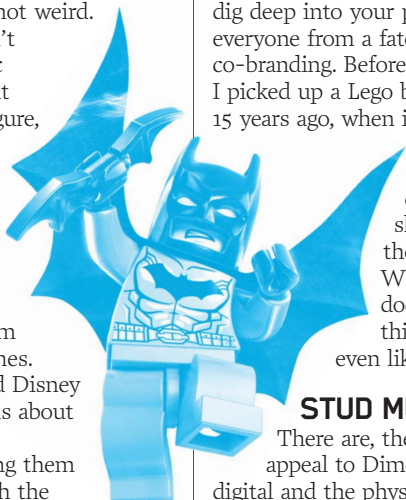
STUD MUFFIN

There are, then, two points of appeal to Dimensions – the digital and the physical. It's the perfect marriage of videogame and toy. Not only is construction surprisingly fun, as you turn glossy pages of a

virtual manual with the triggers, then plonk the finished article down on the glowing Toy Pad, but each model is wonderfully animated in-game. Putting Scooby on the Batmobile sees the scaredy dog drive around with his paws over his eyes, and Gandalf says upon entering the Mystery Machine, "This could almost give Shadowfax a run for his money." Interactions alone are very nearly worth the price of admission: at one point Wyldstyle asks Wonder Woman, "Hey girl, things with Superman all good? We should grab a coffee some time."

Rides such as Owen Grady's velociraptor and Cyborg's mech really stretch their legs in open worlds. See, if you buy character packs, not only do you get linear missions, but a sandbox, too. Chell's, for instance, is set in a free-roam Aperture laboratory complete with a Stephen Merchant-voiced Wheatley asking you to gather his pitiful malfunctioning turrets, and with GLaDOS chiming in with soundbites such as, "I'd hoped you'd have been eaten by a deer by now."

Sure, MGS V is fantastic, but there isn't a game that's got me smiling like Lego Dimensions. The clinically bare aesthetic of my flat, like my work desk, has often been likened to that of a serial killer, but no longer. I'm weirdly proud of the plastic tat crowding my mantelpiece: Gollum and Shelob, Homer and car, Chell and turret. They're something real to represent the hours I've invested, no matter how embarrassing. Case in point: I sent a picture of my collection to a non-gaming friend and they replied with, "Wow, nerd central." It's worth the scorn. I am 26 by the way.





Jen Simpkins

JUST BECAUSE IT'S CHRISTMAS DOESN'T MEAN ONLINE GAMERS SHOULD HAVE TO HOLD HANDS.

Games are way too desperate for us to make friends in online multiplayer

From the moment Sony announced it had ruled out always-online for PS4, my Grinchy, two-sizes-too-small heart rejoiced. Success! Never would I be forced to fraternise with total strangers, shackled by the concept of 'connecting' with the world, even while playing single-player campaigns. I was alone, except for when I chose not to be. Peace on Earth.

But my feelings of goodwill are fading fast. I wasn't exactly dreaming of a yellow Christmas this year, but hark! Here's a holly-jolly choir of game devs come to piss on the virgin snow of my solo campaign. Don't get me wrong – I don't hate multiplayer games. It's the attempt to strong-arm players into interacting with each other that I find insufferable, like we're all at some mandatory office party where we have to get to know each other or lose our bonuses.

To play Need For Speed 2015, I have to be constantly connected to the internet, because apparently there's a direct correlation between how well I'm able to drift around the city and how

popular I am among my virtual peers. EA encourages players to spread Christmas cheer by having them validating strangers' existences through the medium of snapshots. Progression is linked to 'likes' on your shared snapshots: the more 'likes' you get, the more in-game Rep you earn. It's all a little too PewDiePie for my liking.

FALSE FRIENDSHIP

They seem determined that online multiplayer morphs into some sort of hellish Whoville love-in: random players waving to each other, singing carols and promising to name their children after each other as they merrily teabag AI soldiers and retweet each others' selfies.

"But it's Christmas!" squeaks Tiny Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5, hobbling along on his crutches and begging me to play online with a bunch of unknowns who share my poor judgment. Bah, humbug! You still owe me my local multiplayer. And £50.

It's TowerFall with actual friends or nothing, so stop dragging me under the online mistletoe. What was Elvis all shook up about? I'd rather be lonely this Christmas.

WRITER BIO

Staff writer Jen Simpkins turned up at OPM with a grand total of zero people on her Friends List. When people ask her where her Christmas spirit is, she points to the bottle of single malt whisky sitting in the corner.



Matthew Pellett

YOU SPEND EIGHT HOURS RUBBING AGAINST WALLS LIKE A FRICTION BURN FETISHIST, LOOKING FOR SYMBOLS.

I'm fed up of playing games like a drinking bird. Devs need to change their collectible systems

There's a gorgeous new action game out that you've waited years to play. The developer's spent thousands of hours fine-tuning the smallest of details in every level. You pop the disc in your PS4. You praise the PlayStation gods for finally delivering this world. And then you spend the next eight hours rubbing up against walls like a friction burn fetishist, hoping to see an X symbol appear on-screen.

Does that sound familiar? Or is it just me? Because if there are collectibles in my games, I will always approach them the same way: plonk me in a linear environment and I'll first locate the exit, then avoid it and spend all my time doing a circuit of the level boundaries and poking around in alcoves and cul-de-sacs, nodding up and down, over and over, for that telltale glint. Up and down. Up and down. It's ruining my enjoyment.

It's simple: I can't appreciate the world in which I'm supposed to be living if I have to spend more time studying its masonry for pick-ups than admiring the bigger picture. Forget woods and trees – games have

taught me to do nothing less than study the bloody bark with a magnifying glass.

Ignoring pick-ups isn't an option, I've tried. I'm long past the point of caring about my virtual trophy cabinet's heft, but collectibles matter – frequently offering snippets of critical world lore in the form of text or audio tracks.

PICK-UPS AND PLAY

In third-person games, a character's eyes or head tilts can point us towards nearby collectibles to ease the pain somewhat. But what about first-person games, where those hints aren't available? I propose automated pick-ups.

Seriously. I'd be perfectly content for my next big shooter to still hide things off the beaten path so long as it doesn't ask me to become a pixel-hunting magpie in order to find them. Instead, if I'm in an out-of-the-way area and step within a small radius of a secret, it should automatically trigger a scene in which my character spots the collectible and scoops it up.

That way, we can all keep our cameras centred on the stuff designed to blow us away, not the copy-and-paste furniture littering a level's rim.

WRITER BIO

Editor Matthew Pellett struggles enough when trying to find items in his fridge – or his keys on his desk. All he wants is a break from the lost-and-found routine and to enjoy his gameworlds once more. Is that so much to ask?

IN
THE
MOOD
FOR...

Languages

English, motherflipper! Do you speak it? Well, these games don't – or *shouldn't*...

1 FEZ

The writing's on the wall – but in indie puzzle platformer Fez, it's in the form of a coded alphabet. ABC? More like IDK. Fortunately, Polytron designer Phil Fish has us speaking his language faster than you can say, "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog."

2 METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

SNAKE, SNAKE, SNAKE. Listen up. The only Russian words you *really* need to know are "da," "nyet" and "vodka." But go right ahead, Fulton yourself an interpreter, just for kicks. Only please don't expect your Soviet pal to speak fluent chokehold – he's probably going to take this one personally.

3 LOCOROCO

We hope you like your amorphous blobs musical! Tilt-a-whirl treat LocoRoco rolled out of Japan and onto our PSPs in 2006, with the eponymous heroes bringing their own adorable brand of gibberish. Developer Tsutomu Kouno wanted to avoid alienating non-Japanese players, so he created a whole new vernacular. No biggie, right?

4 THE SIMS 3

"Chee Waga Choochoo! Ugh!" Simlish hilarity ensues when your Sim needs to go to work, but finds themselves encumbered by a single dirty dish left lying in front of the door. We feel ya, bro. We've all occasionally called in sick with a similar excuse.

5 BROTHERS: A TALE OF TWO SONS

Brothers made use of PS3's controls in innovative ways to convey the strength of Naia and Naiee's sibling bond. The intrepid twosome also communicate in an indecipherable dialect: if actions speak louder than words, then this game screams at the top of its ample lungs.

6 THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

Oh, to hear those three little words... "FUS RO DAH!" The infamous "force, balance, push" Dragon Shout is but a single scale in the glittering hide of Skyrim's language, Dovah-Zul. In the battle for a dragon's soul, however, silence is far from golden – speech is a deadly weapon.

7 ASSASSIN'S CREED UNITY

"Hang on a second," a befuddled world asks of

Ubisoft. "Aren't these supposed to be *French* throats that we're decimating? Where's all ze, 'Ow you say, hon hon baguette Eiffel Tower?'" "Errrrrr... Fear not, the Animus is translating it for you! Into... Cockney slang!" a flustered Ubi volunteered. And that was that.

8 JOURNEY

Don't worry, you'll find no Don't Stop Believin' jokes here. We promise. Honest. An almost inexpressibly beautiful co-op experience, Journey quite fittingly makes all expression abstract. The game lets you and your partner speak through chirps and chimes, ensuring you don't feel like you're livin' in a lonely world. Oh, bugger. So close.

9 ODDWORLD: ABE'S ODDYSSEE

He's escaped PS1! Now tearing his way through PS4's Oddworld: New 'N' Tasty! (pictured), with his floor-waxing days long behind him, Mudokon rebel Abe prefers communicating via whistles and farts thanks to GameSpeak orders. When letting one rip doesn't get his point across, however, there's always mind control to fall back on. Handy.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

OKAGE: SHADOW KING

Your luckless little sister Annie falls foul of a linguistic curse, meaning she can only speak in pig-Latin in this PS2 import.

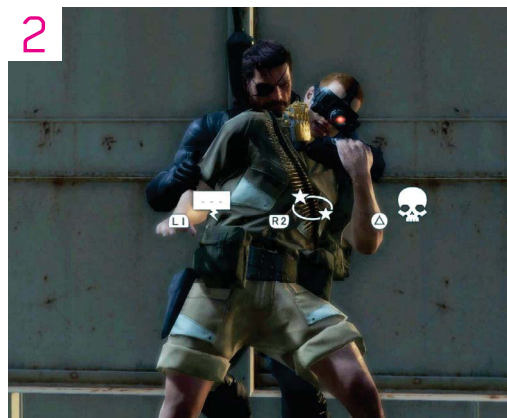
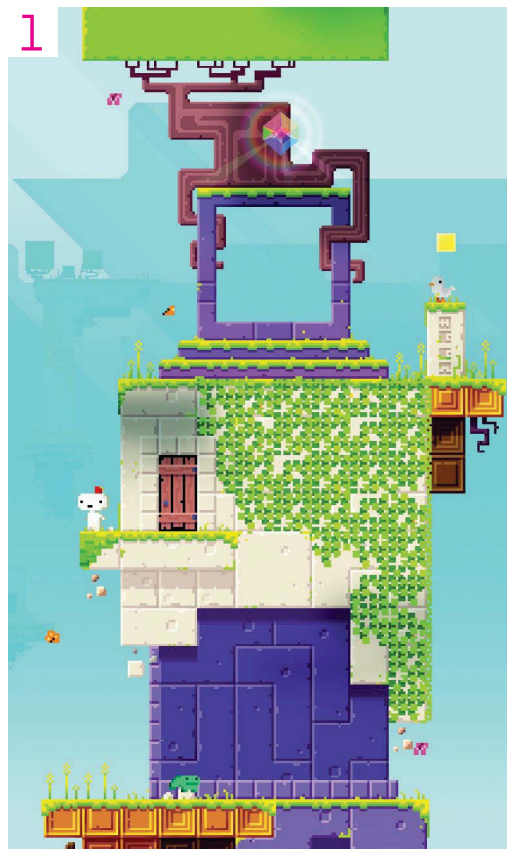
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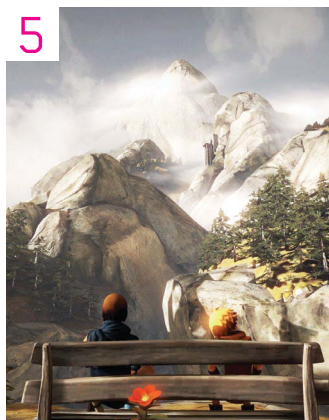
Yorda tries in vain to chat with Ico in the PS2 action-adventure. Good job there are subtitles when you replay the game.

RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

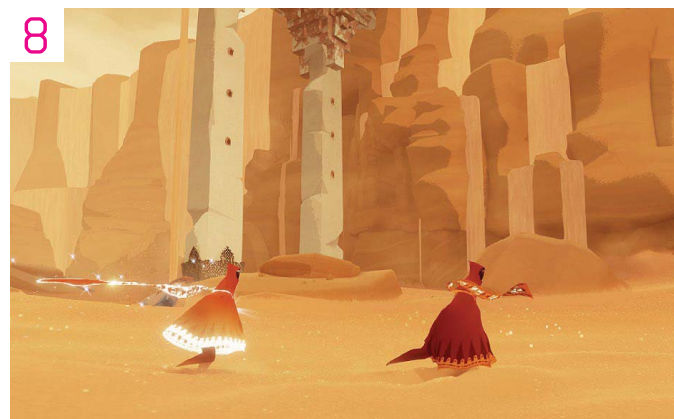
It's all Greek to her now, but Lara will be learning the language next year when she finally returns to PS4.

Did we miss your fave language? Got a brilliant In The Mood For idea? Show and tell at twitter.com/opm_uk.





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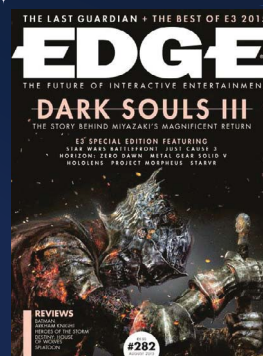
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A large, muscular character with a brown beard and a brown cap with the number '11' on it. He is wearing green and brown tactical gear. The background is a bright, hazy landscape with green hills and a large, metallic structure.

PREVIEWS

32 BATTLEBORN

Born for the battle or one for the killing fields? We go hands-on with the new FPS.

031

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PREVIEW

Some of the 25-strong cast seem like joke characters at first, but they all cleverly complement each other.

032





"THE CLASSES ARE BONKERS, AND THERE ARE LOADS OF THEM."

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 9 FEB
PUB 2K GAMES / **DEV** GEARBOX

BATTLEBORN

Gearbox melds genres to mad, but entertaining, effect



MOBA-FPS might be the kind of acronym that sends people into anaphylactic shock, but Gearbox's mash-up of Borderlandsy blasting and Multiplayer Online Battle Arena

is a lot more straightforward, and gripping, than it sounds. If you're looking for a snappy sell, it's this: the game's classes are bonkers, there are loads of them, and you won't have to grind for days to unlock their most enticing abilities.

Battleborn takes place in a galaxy that's been whittled down to a single, hotly contested star by a gobby extra-dimensional evil, the Varelsi. They're headed by turncoat mortal Lothar Rendain, who's basically Handsome Jack from Borderlands meets Ronan from Guardians Of The Galaxy. The game's 25 characters, eight available from the outset, are split into five factions with distinct traits. The tree-hugging Eldrid have health to spare but lack shields, for example, while the United Peacekeepers are your classic space marines, all ballistics tech and shoulder-pads you could park an Apache on.

CLASS WAR

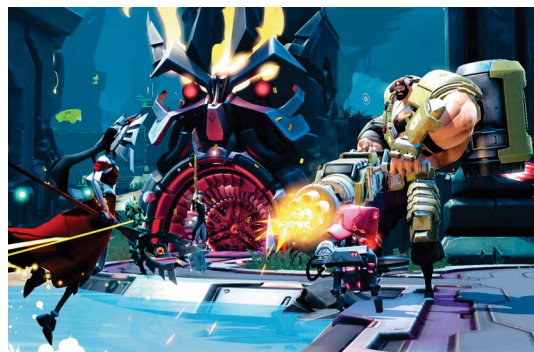
Whether you're tackling the fairly traditional campaign, with its array of escort missions and boss fights, or digging into objective-based 5v5 multiplayer, the initial (and considerable) delight of Battleborn is in working out what each character is and does. There are a few more familiar faces



PREVIEW

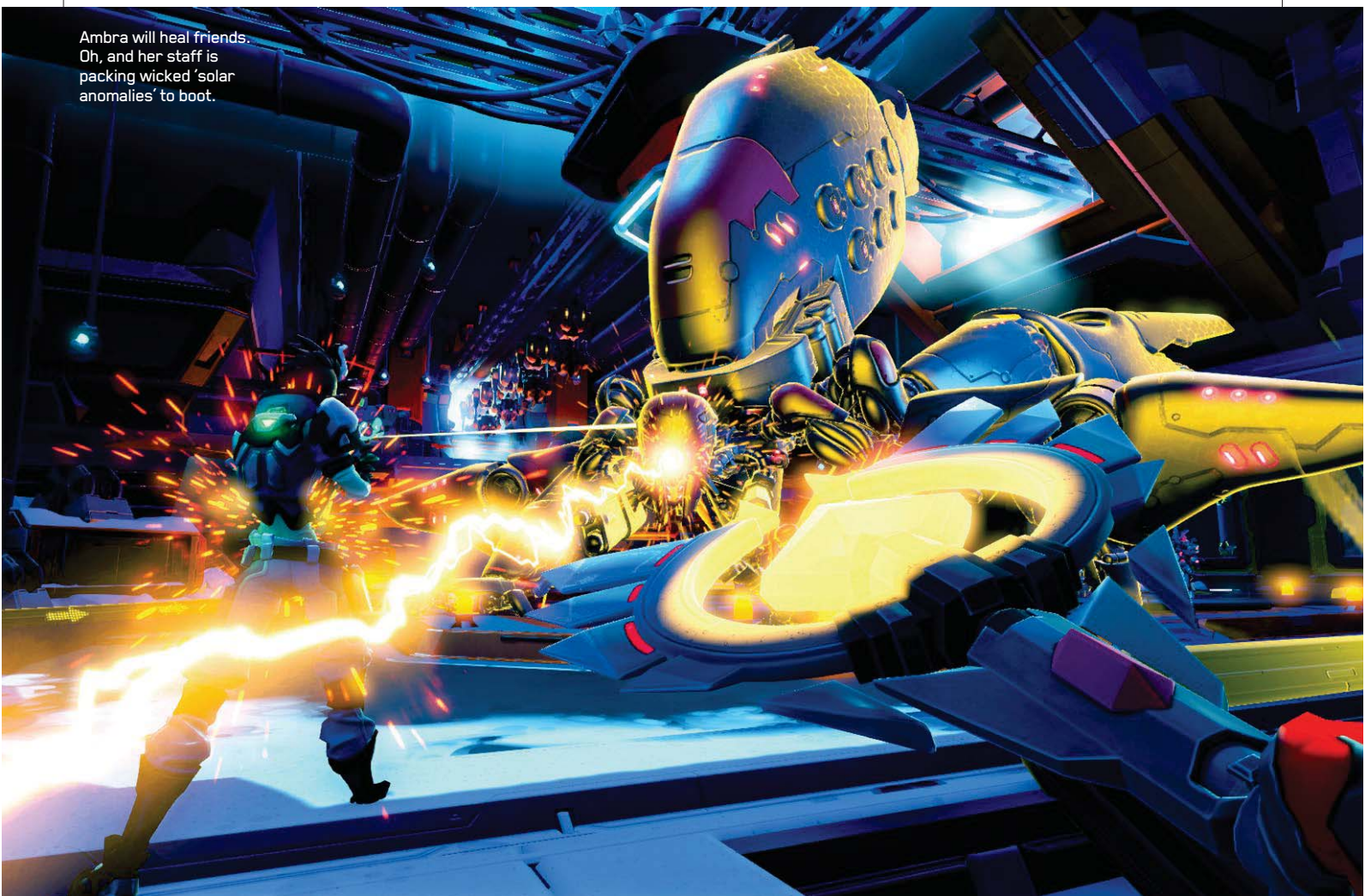


Left Melka's pistol ejects vials of poison when reloaded, so maybe don't wait for the click before rushing her position.



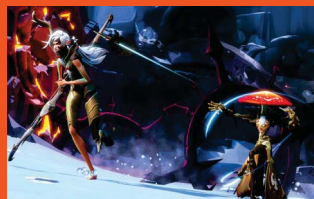
Right Montana controls battles with sprays of ice and fire – and a meaty, NFL-worthy shoulder tackle.

Ambra will heal friends. Oh, and her staff is packing wicked 'solar anomalies' to boot.



Molten warfare

How to master Battleborn's MOBA-influenced Meltdown mode



1 Don't know MOBAs? Fear not. The goal is simple: protect your 'bots as they trundle from spawn point to incinerator, while blasting the enemy's.



2 Terrain spells work wonders in cramped lanes. Ambra's sunspots serve as healing points or traps. Thorn can summon quagmires of natural energy.



3 Don't forget those map fixtures. Turrets won't trouble the likes of big bruiser Montana, but they're deadly against slow melee classes.



4 When the going gets tough, the tough drop Ultimates. Caldarius can launch himself skyward, fire a burst then slam to earth. Time it carefully.



Above The campaign is Battleborn at its most Battleborning – think Borderlands, but sliced into half-hour chapters, with the loot removed.

“REYNA FEELS PUNY AT FIRST, BUT HER LATE-GAME UNLOCK IS A MATCH-WINNER... IN THE RIGHT HANDS.”



Above The Battleborn Beta will be headed to PS4 first in early 2016 – it's one you need to sample before pre-ordering.



Above Borderlands did bosses too, of course, but Battleborn one-ups its sister titles by naming this Big Bad 'Geoff'.

»

— Oscar Mike is a nod to the Modern Warfare crowd, with his rifle and grenades — but the majority are marvellously unhinged. Take Benedict, the eagle dude. One of his special moves is an assailant-shredding backflip — clamp **12** to transit smoothly into a glide, raining rockets as you go.

Then there's ISIC, one of Gearbox's chummy-yet-murderous AI stars. He's a lumbering bullet sponge, able to conjure up rotating forcefields, but he's also startlingly elusive thanks to a short-ranged teleport. Many of Battleborn's characters are played for laughs — we're big fans of maniacal witch Orendi and her catchphrase, “Ever wonder what your own stomach tastes like?” But their strengths, weaknesses and the way they complement each other are the result of serious thought. Case in point: Reyna, a sneering duellist who can shield an ally and spot-mark enemies, increasing the damage they take per hit. She feels puny at first, but one of her late-game unlocks is a deployable energy dome that can seal off chokepoints. It's a match-winner, in the right hands.

TOP GEAR

That brings us to progression. In keeping with traditional MOBAs, each character can level-up from zero to the maximum ten in a single match, picking between two sets of powers or perks per level. This

creates two broad variations of each class — Eldrid rogue Melika can be upgraded to hit harder and faster, for instance, or to do more enduring damage with her status attacks — but you're free to mix unlocks from each strand for a daunting set of situation-specific builds.

There's an element of development outside of matches, with Gear items bought with in-game currency fine-tuning your stats, but the emphasis is on what happens in the fray — not least because the Shards you'll need to activate Gear items in a match can also be spent on optional map fixtures, such as auto-turrets or healing stations. You can also develop your affinity with a character through repeat play to

customise their skill tree, but you'll still be evenly matched against players starting from scratch.

It may sound over-elaborate, but the trick to great teamwork in Battleborn is simply to make sure that high-level abilities come into use as soon as possible. Allow more obviously devastating characters to deprive team-mates of kills and XP early on, and you may find yourself massively out-gunned at a critical juncture. Consider the bony priestess Ambra. Her load-out is unintuitive, a mix of terrain control and lifesteal spells backed up by wafer-thin health, but if you keep her out of the fight, you'll be denied her Ultimate, which calls in a gigantic meteor.

THE 'BORN IDENTITY

Battleborn's mix of genres isn't without its rough edges. The choice of perspective grates a little — it's difficult to aim area-effect powers when you're neck-deep in Varelsi skirmishers — and the handling feels quite wooden by the standards of a *proper* shooter.

The experience may also sour if players aren't prepared to work together, as is often the case during online multiplayer. But for those who persist, we suspect this will prove to be a family-sized chocolate box of a game — messy, yet cleverly layered and very hard to put down. ■

FACTRICK

1. ARAC ATTACK

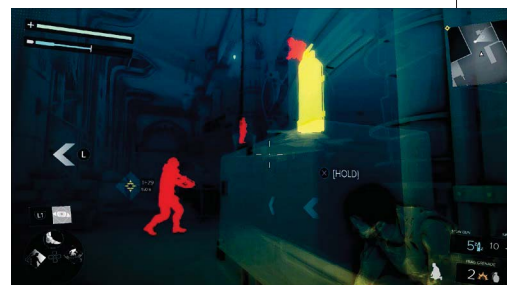
Incursion is all about base versus base. Each team gets a pair of AI-controlled spider-tanks.

2. DEV TALK

Devastation is the traditionalist option — a mix of objective capture and team deathmatch.

3. FIVE ALIVE

Stick with a character long-term to unlock five alternative skills for their ten-level skill tree.



FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 23 FEB / **PUB** SQUARE ENIX / **DEV** EIDOS MONTREAL

DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED

One man, one goal... dozens of ways to complete it



The central room of the Dvali Theatre is its auditorium, but it's a ghost of what it once was. The seats are gone, ripped out and replaced by weapons crates and scattered tech, the stage covered with its new gangster occupants. In February, you will probably find your way into this room – the question is: how? Will you attack this multi-stage centrepiece through the stalls? Via the enclosed box seats? Or from up on the circle balcony?

Deus Ex: Mankind Divided does all it can to extend Human Revolution's goal of letting you play exactly how you want – so making the majority of players arrive in the same room might, at first, seem like a betrayal of that value. In fact, it's its best example. More than ever, and fittingly for a theatre, this is where you have to perform your chosen role.

desk to disable any nearby cameras, grab crates to build your own staircase, trip alarms to draw faraway guards.

Or you *could* have all the right augmentations, and make avoiding the room your own personal performance: a no-show for the ages. Ladies and gentleman, for this performance, the role of Adam Jensen will be played by thin air... because he's off hacking into all of your email accounts.

AUGMENTED REALITY

Crucially, everything above can be strung together. Mankind Divided doesn't really go in for tech trees, meaning you create your own strengths and weaknesses, pivoting between stealth and combat as you want to or need to.

In our hands-on playthroughs of the Dvali Theatre level, we found ourselves switching ideas on the fly, most often because we just wanted to try something out – it's the same kind of experimental itch that Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain has been offering lately. It's a slightly less malleable world – Adam is a much stiffer character than Big Boss (presumably because he's 85% steel) – but there's still a quiet joy in poking at systems to see the results.

It's not blind experimentation, either. We also try a tutorial level, set in Dubai, that gives Jensen a selection of late-game upgrades, offering up a long set of foe-filled corridors to play about with your tools. We haven't seen exactly what causes him to then lose all those abilities, though the demo does end with a building falling on him, so we have an idea.

After playing in Dvali, the real pleasure will come from earning back our favourite skills – if this is a game about performing the role you've chosen to play, then those props are going to be essential. ■

FACTRICK

1. NEWS CAPER

The game world is being drawn out of real-life concerns – one ghetto city has been 3D printed.

2. KILLJOY

The game's head writer wanted to kill off Adam Jensen... until the rest of the team cried out in terror.

3. DEEP SECRET

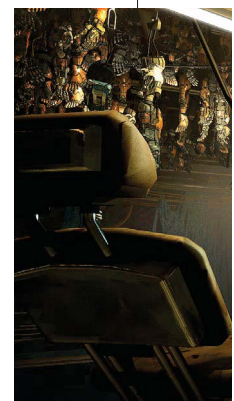
Even the Dvali Theatre demo contained a secret exit – expect a lot of hidden content on your journey.

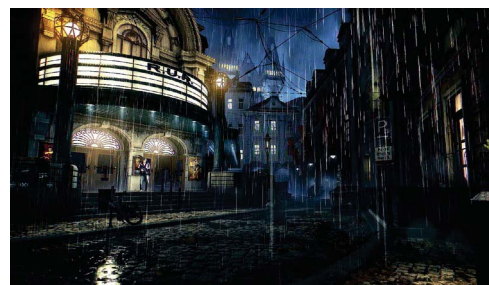
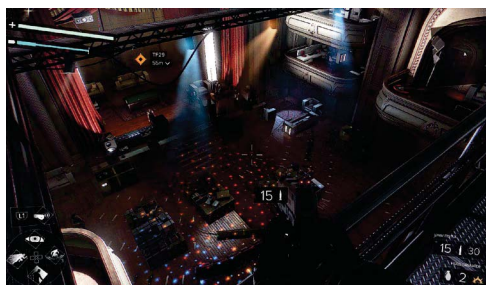
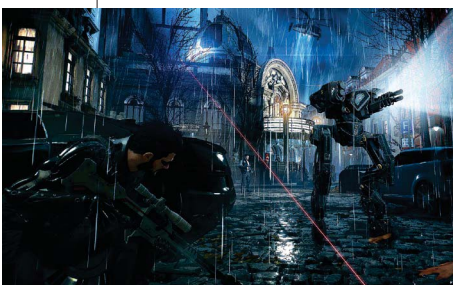
SHOW-STOPPER

Say you've arrived upstairs, having used a bevy of stealth augmentations to mask your infiltration. You open the door to a box, and find two henchmen surveying the villainous bustle below. After using the silent Tesla augmentation, which lets you lock on and stun multiple enemies, you survey the scene yourself. You could Icarus Dash (think Dishonored's Blink, but yellower) onto the lighting rig, before picking your way through the rafters to get out to the otherwise inaccessible hallway leading backstage.

Alternatively, you could use up a Biocell (the new game's solution to the troublesome Energy system of HR) to beef up your power reserves, before switching on Leg Silencers and active camo so that you can drop to the floor and slip through a grate, literally right under the feet of your enemies.

If you came in through the front door, you could use the myriad cover to move up through the room, firing a shrapnel nano-blade into the wall to violently distract the guards while you slip behind the curtain. Or you could stomp into the centre and use the good old Typhoon attack to take out five hoods, before mopping up the rest with a combat shotgun. You could snipe from the balcony, take to the technical





■ In this scene with Adam crouching in the street, we spot four totally separate points of access. It's safe to say you've got a lot of options here.



"THERE'S A QUIET JOY IN POKING AT SYSTEMS TO SEE THE RESULTS."

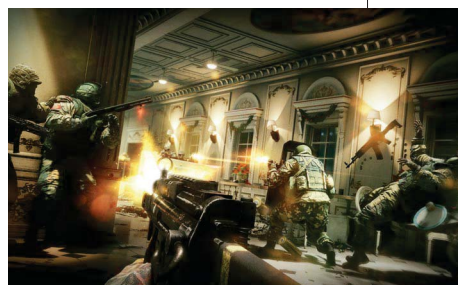
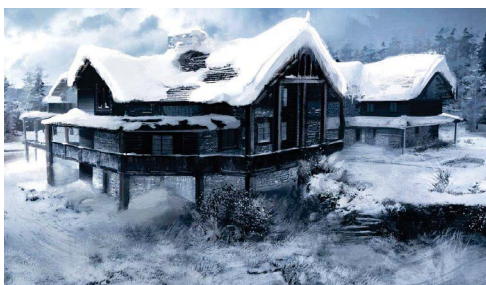
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Adam can still offer up one-shot takedowns whenever he's near an enemy - handy in cramped spaces.



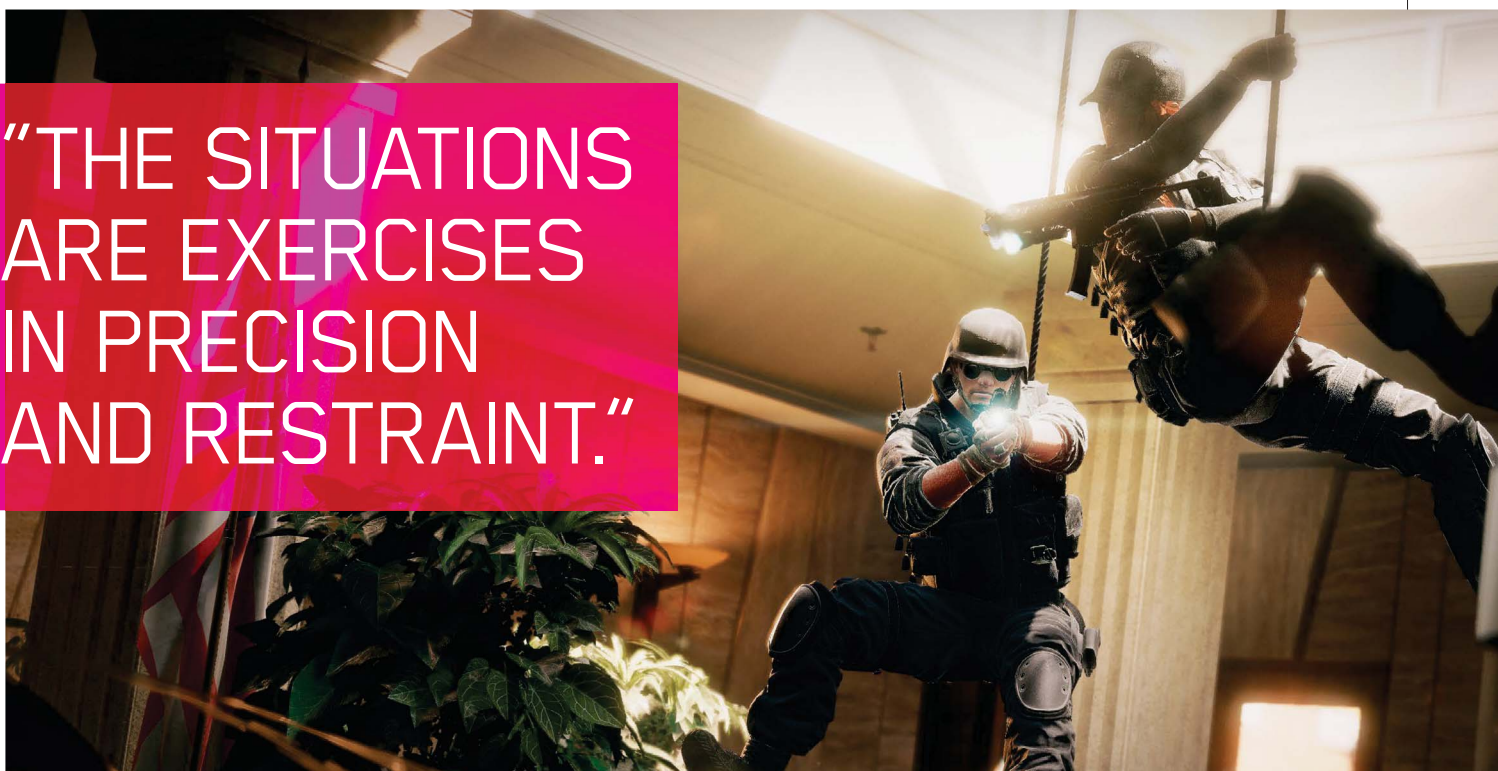
Above Dubai's only a single level as far as we know, meaning this might be as close as you get to exploring its shattered skyline.

PREVIEW



■ Rainbow Six Siege is already a toughie, but the most masochistic of us can up the ante even further by playing in Realism mode.

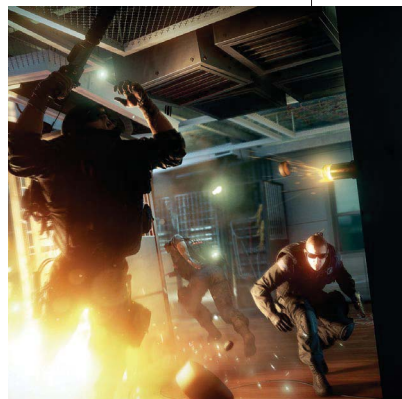
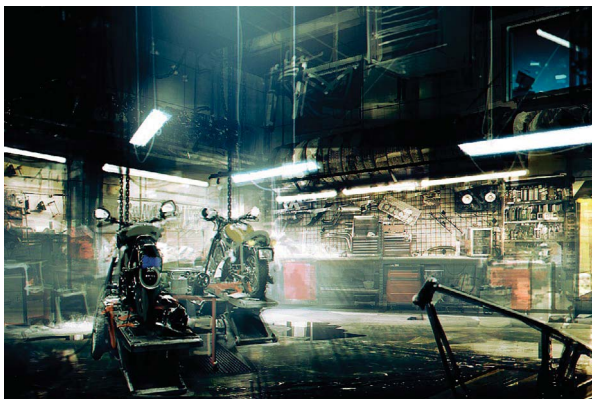
“THE SITUATIONS ARE EXERCISES IN PRECISION AND RESTRAINT.”



Time is your friend when you're playing defensively – slow 'em down, win the round.



Above You don't respawn after getting killed in PvP. You can still help out your team by keeping an eye on the enemy via security cameras, though.




FORMAT PS4 / ETA 1 DEC / PUB UBISOFT / DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL


RAINBOW SIX SIEGE

Clancy's delayed shooter blasts back with solo content



Softly, softly isn't normally the FPS philosophy. You'll wonder whatever happened to 'spray and pray' as you pad through a middle-class couple's kitchen in search of baddies in Rainbow Six Siege.

Take a look at its four gameplay pillars: sieges, destruction, individual operators and single lives. Notice how 'charging into combat' and 'screaming bloody murder' aren't present. Siege demands you show – gasp – a little *tact* in a tactical shooter.

Gung-ho is a no-go. Injuries count, caution reigns and, 60% of the time, you're just stuck holding  in an attempt to stop bleeding out on the lino. You might raise an eyebrow, then, when we say that Rainbow Six Siege is the most fun you can have without taking your scopes off.

We spend a lot of time testing five of 11 brand-new single-player Situations. These timed trials are exercises in precision and tactics. In Tubular Assault we must rid a plane of terrorists, and begin by entering via the jet bridge. We immediately take a bullet to the face, respawn, and – shame spiking our blood – charge straight back in for another go. After meleeing our way through, the cramped, twisting map takes an age to clear.

We pause to think, and start again – busting through the cargo hold with a breach charge offers a swifter route through the aircraft with clearer lines of sight. In no time at all, forward-planning, flexibility and focus pay deadly dividends. Once you think ahead, Siege grants you all the renegade, quick-fire gratification you need

in a package slicker than a slip 'n' slide delivered by a sweaty courier. We are the kings of guns and gadgets.

BE SIEGING YOU

At least until we get to Cold Zone. A different operator, a new heat-seeking scope to juggle, and an angry-looking beekeeper charging towards us and our very-not-short-range sniper. It's Bomberman! Aaand... we're dead. But while Siege slaps you in the face with one hand, it metes out tools with the other. It's exhilarating to figure out how best to dispatch the apiarist and then rescue the hostage. We are the emperors of weapons and widgets.

Then PvP begins. Farewell, pride – we hardly knew ye. The excruciating tension is akin to crawling through barbed wire (but that might be down to the fact we're actually crawling through barbed wire). Even during the infinitely favourable attacking rounds, we repeatedly see our brains dribbling down the front of our body armour.

Thank goodness someone picked the Doc operative. He's a medic (shocker) who can shoot healing syringes, affording an invaluable advantage. Watching your teammate friendly-firing needles into faces is a little disconcerting, despite explanations of, "I'm *helping* him!"

CLANCY THAT

It's our turn to play defence, and we choose Kapkan, purveyor of motion-triggered massacres. Four new maps are unknown territory, but remote-controlled drones help the opposition acquaint itself with the snowy chalet in which we're cowering. A drone finds and tags our carefully booby-trapped hideout. They know we're there, and, as we can't step foot outside our defensive zone, we're now fish in a barrel. Brilliant. Almost as peachy as the fact that an operator with a massive bulletproof shield is creeping towards our hostage. We aim for the feet, but they could be wearing Kevlar flip-flops for all the good it does us.

Ubisoft promises post-launch maintenance and content, so this isn't a shooter that will remain static over time. We hope a nerf for Montagne, The Bulletproof Operator, is first on the list of what's otherwise a finely tuned game of move-and-you-die.

A final note: communication is key in complex, close-quarters combat. You're dead without a headset, so we'd recommend you pick one up along with the game – and that you don't make any sudden movements. ■

FACTRICK

1. PEEKY BLINDERS

Vegas 2's wall-cover system is gone, so there are no third-person views around corners in Siege.

2. CLUSTER... DUCK!

Don't be an idiot – give the Cluster Mine a wide berth. It spits out four grenades when it explodes.

3. SITUATION ROOM

Situations are single-player missions designed for specific operatives, all starring optional objectives.





Medici is Rico's biggest playground yet, a mix of mountains, coasts, forests and flowery countryside.

"WE PLUCK OUT A WATCHTOWER'S BEAMS TO MAKE IT CRUMBLE, JENGA-STYLE."

FORMAT PS4 / ETA 1 DEC / PUB SQUARE ENIX / DEV AVALANCHE

JUST CAUSE 3

One last rampage before our review lands



Ahead of next issue's review, we spend three hours tearing around 400 square miles of Just Cause 3's Mediterranean sandbox with one goal: break it. Given the carnage wreaked upon this unfinished code, occasional lock-ups, which are being ironed out, are just about forgivable – especially given mods.

No, not coded player mods à la Fallout 4, but equipment mods that aren't too unlike cheat codes of old: completing challenges such as races, rampages and wingsuit time trials lets you tinker with your kit. We bolt nitrous onto our tractor. We concoct homing grenades. Best of all, we add a rocket booster to sticky mines so they blast off – we whack four on our jet in all before remembering that mines, y'know, explode. Promptly, it all explodes.

THE CABLE GUY

Just Cause 3 is about constant discovery. Cavorting freely between Medici's regions, which incorporate sprawling towns, dense forests, rolling hills and achingly gorgeous archipelagos, you're forever finding toys. When you do, you can beam them down in a goodies-filled crate from the sky. Where the last game cast you as an action hero, here you're a god.

A wingsuit unfurled gives you the power of almost unlimited flight, and up to four simultaneous wrist-fired cables essentially act as telekinesis. Since you can now press **LB** to reel in whatever's at the other end, few objects are beyond manipulation. At one point we pluck out a watchtower's load-bearing beams one-by-one to make it crumble, Jenga-style.

The downside of your deity-like abilities is that combat seems tame. Tinny gunfire peppering you from all sides (typically as you attempt to liberate various regions by pulling down instruments of propaganda such as billboards) is simply annoying, while shooting back feels just as hollow as in previous games.

However, with a bigger world and more possibilities, it's probably your own fault if you run around with uzis rather than, say, tether exploding barrels to a chopper and use them as wrecking balls. Being creative when planning your holiday is a must... ■



Above Thanks to your now unlimited stash of mines, there's no excuse for letting a minute go by without something exploding.

"WE'LL BE CRAFTING A VARIETY OF WEAPONS FROM ROCK, BONE AND LIGAMENTS."

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 23 FEB
PUB UBISOFT / **DEV** UBISOFT MONTREAL

FAR CRY PRIMAL

Stay sharp – it's the Primal countdown



Since the moment *Far Cry Primal* was announced, we've had our noses to the ground, tracking its scent. We're gaining on our prehistoric prey: we've sniffed out a fresh *Far Cry* flavour, a rich arsenal and a tantalisingly explosive mechanic. Drool.

Primal takes us from *Far Cry 4*'s tyrannical Pagan Min to, er, actual pagans, with 20th century protagonists giving way to Cro-Magnon man. It's a reshaping. "The interesting thing about *Far Cry* is that it's flexible," explains executive producer Dan Hay, while designer Thomas Simon talks of having to "invent new ways to explore, fight and survive that haven't been seen in a previous *Far Cry*."

But us players will be doing the inventing, crafting a massive variety of weapons – spears, bows, blades, clubs – from rock, bone and ligaments. As for things previously unseen, we're sceptical; we're almost positive we've seen an explosion or five in past *Far Cry* games, even if we've never before triggered them by commanding owls to drop bombs (yes, really).

Primal looks set to retain that staple *Far Cry* feel, despite its 'exotic' premise – you'll still be gutting animals for better gear, it's just the creatures' skins are new. Likewise, where *Far Cry 4* taught us to ride elephants, *Primal* will surely give us mammoths. But with the huge shift in time period, and the obvious loss of guns, maybe those tiny tweaks are enough? ■



Above All *Far Cry* games are about survival, but *Primal* really tests resourcefulness – players will have to reinvent the wheel.

Hosting rival hunters and intelligent predators, *Primal*'s world is dense as well as... mammoth.



Above You'll get plenty of help from NPC grunts, but we're most looking forward to a sofa, three friends and tearing into the hordes of alien insects.



The rave goes all night for these day-glo ants. Fingers crossed for the White Gloves DLC.

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 11 DEC
PUB PQUBE / **DEV** SANDLOT

EARTH DEFENSE FORCE 4.1: THE SHADOW OF NEW DESPAIR

Blasting on the shoulders of giant ants in this latest bug squasher



This current-gen debut of the long-running insect invasion series can't wait to get you stuck in its web of ridiculousness. It drops you right in the middle of a massive swarm of giant ants that needs obliterating and, guess what, you've got just the right tools for this supersized extermination.

Subtlety went with the giant ant's head, but you don't go to EDF for nuance. You go for shooty, shooty fun. Choose from four classes – we plump for the Wing Diver, whose flying ability makes dropping into crowds a breeze – and get ready to blast through the guts of any bug you lay eyes on.

A mash-up of Space Invaders and Honey I Shrunk The Kids, EDF quickly becomes a brutal, score-chasing love letter to arcade games of old. Expect to have to learn levels on the lower difficulties before going in with better equipment on the harder ones.

The Shadow Of New Despair is the last game you'll reach for to show off PS4's graphical grunt, but its four-player co-op clashes offer depth when teams are created around the strengths and weaknesses of the classes. Most intriguing is the Fencer, who has an entirely different control scheme to the rest, but looks like a walking tank. EDF will likely always be a cult game, but 4.1 looks to serve that cult well. ■



Press deeper into the campaign and you'll be able to command bug-crushing mechs.



Above All our money is on the massive robot rather than the gigantic ant.



Above It's not all about insects – here's a blueish... uh... dragon... thing?


Here's your first peek at the Italian coastal town of Sapienza. Expect streets, mansions and churches.

"BUYING AT LAUNCH GETS YOU THREE MASSIVE LOCATIONS AND 800 TARGETS."

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 11 MAR
PUB SQUARE ENIX / **DEV** IO INTERACTIVE

HITMAN

Waiting for Agent 47 should be worth it

 In order to give you more stuff when it begins its intriguingly structured launch plan, Hitman's been bumped back to 2016. To recap, the blood-spilling stealthier is launching on PSN in an incomplete state, with an initial three locations – Paris, Sapienza and Marrakesh – before more are deployed into the game throughout the year. Pleasingly, there's now a specific plan for what that extra stuff will entail.

After all, nobody's rushing to spend £40 on one level that's half-complete – this is the first post-Absolution Hitman, and it must impress. We don't need a boring story about a bald guy on a quest. Just the killing. Buying at launch gets you three massive locations with six missions, 40 signature kills and up to 800 targets to set up in the returning Contracts mode. Then, from April until June, new sandboxes will be added month-by-month: first a level set in Thailand, then one in the US and one in Japan.

Beyond that is unknown, but the eventual result will be a complete Hitman game crammed with "more stuff than Absolution." And along the way, IO will be adding weekly 'one-chance-only' assassination events – fail and the target's forever escaped your game. In theory, you should be able to play Hitman throughout 2016 and always have more to do. If that's true, it'll be worth waiting for. ■

Above David Bateson returns as 47 – check back next issue for our interview with the star.

Soft launch

How Hitman's arrival on PS4 breaks down



1 Hitman launches in March with three large locations, six campaign levels and many NPCs to play with in Contracts mode. Live events will begin.



2 In April, you also get a level set in Thailand. In May, Agent 47 heads to America. In June, Hitman expands the elaborate slaughter to Japan as well.



3 There are two ways to buy it: purchase March's 'Intro Pack' and then buy the 'Upgrade Pack' separately, or get 'The Full Experience' for cheaper.

As with classic Capcom games, bosses often change tactics once their health drops, so keep mobile.

"SURVIVAL IS A QUESTION OF FAST THUMBS AND KEEPING YOUR HEAD."

F FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2016 / **PUB** DEVOLVER DIGITAL / **DEV** ENEME ENTERTAINMENT

EITR

Eneme's indie Souls-alike is a sight for Thor eyes



Developers often shy away from discussing their influences, for fear of unflattering comparisons. "Uncharted? Never heard of it," they'll protest, while hip new star Ethan Drak trots through jungles behind them. Not so Eitr's designer David Wright. "Demon's Souls, Dark Souls, Bloodborne – I love them to death," he says. "I'm not going to hide the fact that I was heavily inspired by those games."

Eitr is essentially Souls by way of Diablo, an isometric dungeon crawler set in the world of Norse mythology. The god Loki, ever a thorn in Valhalla's side, has spilled a corrupting magical substance all over the mortal plane, unleashing a horde of ghouls, skeleton mages and hideous cowed entities composed of zombie rats.

You play as the Shieldmaiden, a little-spoken warrior based on the legendary Norse heroine Lagertha, as portrayed in the Vikings TV series. Aside from being a tenacious fighter, she's immune to the Eitr blight. Why? That's for you to discover. "We want the player to go around finding pieces of the puzzle and put it together themselves – unravel the story, figure out what her fate is going to be," says Wright.

Along the way, you'll need to master a punishing combat system that turns on precise reading of enemy behaviour and careful management of a stamina bar. Using her sword and targe (shield), the Shieldmaiden can deliver withering combos and

dash attacks, block or parry blows, and sidestep while locked on. Even at this early stage in development, there's real finesse to the action – you can bolt a frost gem to your shield, for example, which freezes an enemy in place when you parry. You can also knock back a heal potion in the fray, but, as with Souls, this may spell doom if enemies sucker-punch you during the animation. For the truly courageous, there's also the option to equip a secondary weapon such as an axe instead of your shield, opening up a whole new move set.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

You'll need to really think on your feet if you're to see off even the lowliest of Eitr's nasties. Most foes have tricks up their sleeves, be it a rogue popping invisibility pills or a mage filling a chokepoint with poison gas. And then there are the bosses, which include a bony titan who's partial to some cheeky area-of-effect sorcery.

Level-ups and loot-drops such as enchanted rings may help, but survival is fundamentally a question of fast thumbs and keeping your head – just like in Dark Souls, a game that has gone too long without a worthy opponent. We think Eitr might just measure up. ■



Above Inspired by mobile game *Sword & Sworcery*, Eitr's glorious yet melancholy pixel art is its most obvious strength.

FACTRICK

1. SWAP SHOP

You can switch Favor points for permanent stat increases, or keep them for bigger boosts lost on death.

2. CLONE WARS

Before Eitr, Eneme was working on an infinite runner called *Jump Bros* for mobiles. We're glad it quit.

3. DAMNED DAMSEL

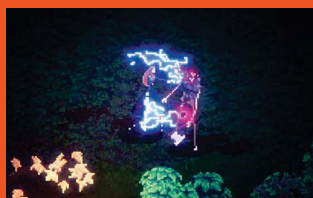
The Shieldmaiden is a reaction against the helpless female stereotype, says Eneme's Tobi Harper.

These lumbering ogres are tough and will keep you at arm's length, but can be side-stepped.



Swords not words

Hacked off? Try these abilities out



1 Dual-wielding an axe and sword lets you electrify your blades for a short time, massively increasing attack power. Watch you don't exhaust your stamina, though.



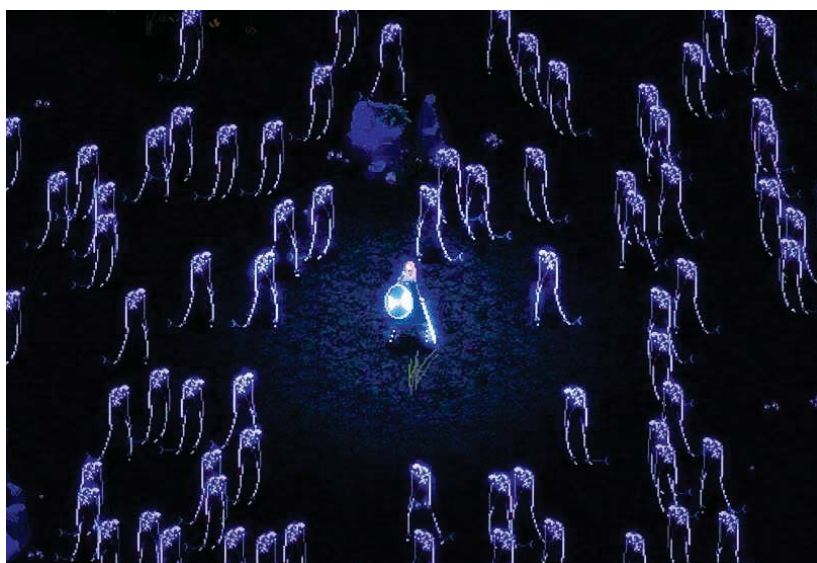
2 The bow and arrow can be quickfired while darting around, much like the gun in Bloodborne. It's harder to aim, so pick your moments well.



3 This heavy flame strike deals serious harm across a group, but leaves you open. Whittling foes down may be safer than going for the straight KO.



4 Your dodge can be upgraded into a short-ranged ninja teleport, again recalling Bloodborne. You're invincible while using it, so use it often.



Left It's at times like this that limited stamina becomes a real pain in the Norse. Expect a challenge.

Above This is the Wanderer. It's not clear whether he's an enemy... but we don't like the look of that head.

"A UNIQUE FIRST-
PERSON HORROR
THAT CASTS YOU
AS A TODDLER."

Teddy appears to want to help, but we're massively creeped-out by that stare. Brrrrr.

F FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 10 DEC / **PUB** KRILLBITE STUDIO / **DEV** KRILLBITE STUDIO

AMONG THE SLEEP

The horror that plays on childhood fears and threatens to fill nappies



Remember when, with the light switch out of reach, hiding beneath the duvet seemed the only sensible course of action? When the contents of that dark corner of your bedroom proved impossible to discern and overpoweringly menacing? Norwegian studio Krillbite wants to take you back to that time with *Among The Sleep*, a unique take on the first-person horror genre that casts you as a two-year-old toddler, waddling and crawling your way through a spooky suburban house.

You won't be on your own, however. Teddy, a gift received on your second birthday, during the game's prologue, comes to life and helps you escape your cot. He's nervous, too, and will spend most of the game riding on your back to guide the way (he even lights up when hugged), but those unblinking, sewn-on eyes and unsettling children's TV presenter intonations are hardly a source of comfort.

CREEPY CRAWLER

The likes of *Alien: Isolation* have raised the bar since the game made its PC debut over a year ago, but even today, *Among The Sleep*'s setup feels fresh. The swaying, low-set camera that conveys your diminutive stature and uneasy locomotion is wonderfully judged, while the effort it takes to heave about furniture, which would be no impediment to an adult, underscores your vulnerability.

Best of all, PS4 players are getting a much improved version of the game. The whole thing has been dragged, kicking and screaming, like a child disputing bed time, from Unity 3 to 5.2 and boasts a

complete visual and audio overhaul as a result (don't try visually overhauling your own children, though). Textures have been tidied up, the physics of the game's many interactive objects have been tightened and it all now runs at a stable 60 frames per second.

One thing that won't be making the jump is VR support. While the PC version dabbled in virtual reality, Krillbite decided that it was an ill fit (quite literally, given how all that swaying movement and being picked up by your towering parents quickly induces nausea), so don't expect PlayStation VR compatibility when the new hardware is released next year.

Even without that, however, *Among The Sleep*'s clever narrative arc and unique perspective promise to deliver one of the most intriguing PlayStation horror experiences yet. Completing it will be anything but child's play. ■



Above *Among The Sleep* mixes ominous exploration with simple puzzle solving.

on
the
box

judged only by
their covers



MX VS ATV SUPERCROSS ENCORE

This homage to '80s trial-riding TV show Kick Start is the ultimate test of balance. Pick your bike and complete the course, only ever hopping on one wheel. Quad Bike mode is insanely hard!
FORMAT PS4 **ETA** WINTER



RESIDENT EVIL ORIGINS COLLECTION

This zombie multiplayer has you taking control of a decapitated, undead head. Bite your way from within the walls of a mansion and outside to freedom.
FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 22 JAN



NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: THE LAST MOVIE

Pick a clothes horse hero in this Zoolander spin-off, with stylings from merchant sailor chic to fluoro-tiger. Get Catwalk trophies before the Blue Steel deathmatch.
FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 5 FEB

SET THE WORLD ON FIRE

| 01 DECEMBER 2015

JUST CAUSE 3

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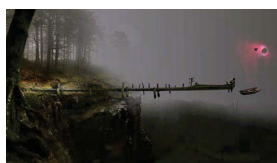
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PREVIEW ROUND-UP

We hope you're a fan of shadows, as this month we're dragging you into the darkness of Styx's sequel, forcing you through the claustrophobic hallways of Allison Road and then the audio hellscape of Thumper...



ALLISON ROAD

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2016
PUB TEAM17 / **DEV** LILITH LTD

Remember when we told you about the P.T.-inspired Allison Road taking to Kickstarter last month? Well, faster than you can shriek, "Oh God, why is there so much blood?" Lilith had suspended its crowdfunding appeal to instead realise its nightmarish vision by teaming up with Worms publisher Team17. Lilith also confirmed in an update that your descent into madness won't just be confined to a house, with concept art of a forest that you'll get to nervously stumble through. One thing's for sure, any worms you'll see in this game won't be called Bum Fluff and will be best avoided. Probably. ■

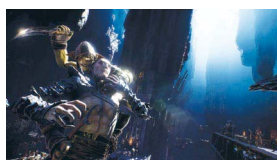


FURI

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** SPRING 2016
PUB THE GAME BAKERS / **DEV** THE GAME BAKERS



Boss fights. They might be destroyers of DualShocks, but they're also capable of producing the sort of genius that sticks with you long after you've floored them. Furi is hoping to achieve the latter next year, as it's been described as "a frenzied all-boss fighter" by its developer The Game Bakers. Afro Samurai creator Takashi Okazaki has helped design the big bads that will attempt to keep you in place and, if it captures the emphatic feeling of the best boss fights, Furi will surely make its way onto your hard drive next year.



STYX: SHARDS OF DARKNESS

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2016
PUB FOCUS HOME INTERACTIVE / **DEV** CYANIDE

If you grabbed Styx's debut adventure Master Of Shadows when it hit PS Plus earlier in the year, and let the little goblin into your heart, then good news. He's back next year for more skulking and stealthy stabbing, with developer Cyanide promising "a more complex narrative and fully realised world." The first screenshot promises plenty of metaphorical darkness – with Styx seemingly braced for a throat opening – and literal darkness to sneak around in. Add in an upgrade to the Unreal 4 engine and it looks like this will be worth sticking around for. ■



FIREWATCH

FORMAT PS4
ETA 9 FEB / **PUB** PANIC
DEV CAMPO SANTO

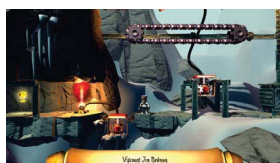
If our news story back in OPM #113 got you ready to head out into the (digital) forests of Wyoming with Firewatch, then grab your compass, hiking boots and don't forget the DualShock 4. The narrative first-person adventure about a volunteer fire lookout and his relationship with his supervisor is in its final stages of development and now has a confirmed release date, so set the alert on your phone to go off on 9 Feb. The teasers at Campo Santo have given us a few new screens to drool over – it still looks gorgeous – and we'll be back in the lookout tower for a full preview next month. ■



FUTUREGRIND

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2016
PUB MILKBAG GAMES
DEV MILKBAG GAMES

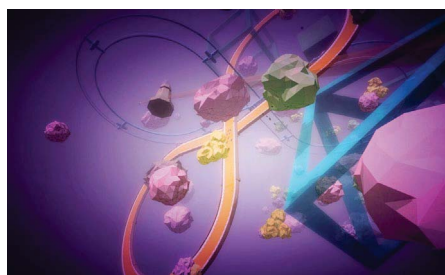
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5 is still giving us night terrors, so it's time to remind you that FutureGrind is still coming, and that it could be the combo-based game you've been dreaming of. As you might have guessed from the 'Grind' part of the title, you travel through levels by, er, grinding on rails with your futuristic bike. If that all sounds a tad too easy, you'll be pleased/horrified to learn that your wheels are specifically coloured neon blue and pink, just like the rails. Yep, mixing the wrong colours together means awful things will happen. How awful? Perhaps Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5 will boot up... ■



LIFE GOES ON: DONE TO DEATH

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2016
PUB INFINITE MONKEYS ENTERTAINMENT
DEV INFINITE MONKEYS ENTERTAINMENT

We hope that you don't get *too* attached to the characters you play as, because Life Goes On: Done To Death will see you slaughtering mini-heroes as if you're Jason Voorhees on the last day of camp. A mix between Lemmings and Limbo, your dead knight's carcasses are vital to solving puzzles and finishing levels. As one hero falls, another one strides in to take his place. We'd advise you to try and ignore the DualShock 4 piping the sounds of their grisly ends through the speakers. ■

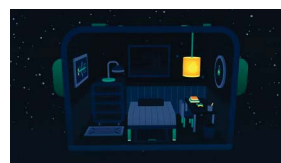


DRIVE!DRIVE!DRIVE!

FORMAT PS4/PS VITA / **ETA** 2016
PUB CHOICE PUBLISHING / **DEV** DIFFERENT CLOTH



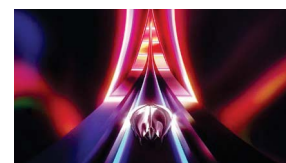
Starting to find tearing around just the one measly track during a race a bit bland? Drive!Drive!Drive! is the title that's going to shake you out of your racing game-induced coma, by making you compete across three different tracks. All at the same time. How's this sorcery going to happen? The idea is that the game will take control of the cars you're not currently flinging around corners, but it can't be trusted for too long, forcing you to jump between each track to ensure simultaneous podium finishes. The only thing better than first place is three first places, after all. You'll also have access to a track(s) creation tool, so budding designers will want to be jotting down their ideas for multi-layered races. F1 feels positively boring by comparison, now. ■



GNOG

FORMAT PS4/VR / **ETA** 2016
PUB DOUBLE FINE
DEV KO-OP MODE

When somebody asks you if you want to have a poke around inside a monster's head, the natural response is, "Nah, you're alright." Fortunately, GNOG's collection of monsters looks less serial killer-y and more brightly coloured and cuddly. Billed as a puzzle adventure game by developer KO-OP Mode, your task is to move through the collection of monster heads and then figure out how to escape them by tinkering with the inside of their 'Gnoggins'. Intriguingly, Playstation VR support is confirmed, so it looks like we'll be getting a really good poke around these monster brains in the next year. ■



THUMPER

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2016
PUB DROOL / **DEV** DROOL

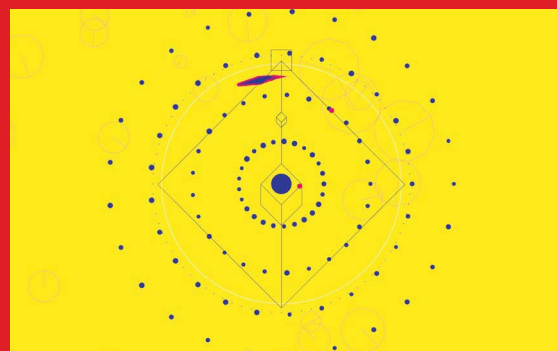
We've heard of rhythm action games, but rhythm violence? That sounds like a first for us at OPM Towers, unless you hear us butchering "Total Eclipse Of The Heart" on SingStar. Boiling it down to just one button and one stick for control, the YouTube announcement trailer sounds like the greatest horror movie score we've yet to hear, managing to reduce us to a nervous wreck before we had our morning coffee. Developer Drool Studios doesn't seem to be mucking around either, as it says: "There's no blood or gore in Thumper, but you will feel the violence." Yikes, looks like our ears are in for one mighty pounding. ■



MOON HUNTERS

FORMAT PS4/PS VITA
ETA FEB 2016 / **PUB** KITFOX GAMES / **DEV** KITFOX GAMES

Thanks to the very generous backers of its Kickstarter campaign, Moon Hunters will be coming to PS4 and PS Vita next year. A procedurally generated action RPG, your aim is to find out why the Moon has stopped mooning and fix its severe mooning issues. Its striking pixel art style is the first thing we noticed, but it also promises tons of depth to go with the visuals, thanks to your actions in each playthrough carrying over to the next. On top of that, it'll also have co-op for you and chums to adventure together. Just don't mention Dinklebot as we go hunting for space cheese in 2016. ■



SOFT BODY

FORMAT PS4/PS VITA / **ETA** 2016
PUB ZEKE VIRANT / **DEV** ZEKE VIRANT



Twin-stick shooters don't tend to look as if they could be found hanging in the Tate Modern, but Soft Body could well be the exception to that rule. Its minimalist art style is reminiscent of stellar indie platformer N++, but it's also aiming to shake up the typical twin-stick formula, while looking rather purddy in the process. You control two 'snakes', one with each stick, aiming to fill in the blanks of levels while avoiding bullets and enemies. Fans of Super Stardust should certainly mark their calendars for this one. ■

INVISIBLE, INC

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** TBC
PUB KLEI ENTERTAINMENT
DEV KLEI ENTERTAINMENT



If you were a fan of PS Plus offering Don't Starve, get very excited. Klei's Invisible, Inc is in development for PS4 and, just like Don't Starve, its world will generate randomly, so keep those toes nimble for when it's time to jump on them. This time you're the leader of a set of spies who have three days to prepare for a 'final mission' by taking on jobs around the world. Combat is turn-based, and should an agent croak it in the field, they stay dead for good. With a release date still to be confirmed for PS4, we'll be making jealous eyes at PC gamers who've already got their grubby little mitts on it. ■





THE OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE 2015 AWARDS

With another incredible year of PlayStation goodness coming to a close, we've rounded up the very best of 2015 for our prestigious honours

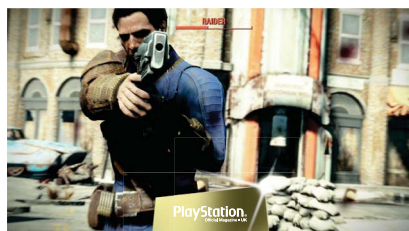
That box of magic beneath your TV has enjoyed a pretty spectacular 12 months. It's allowed us to charge into the trenches of Hoth, to save the sheep of Afghanistan with a Fulton and to ramble through the rubble of post-apocalypse Boston. So sit back and celebrate the best that has hit your hard drive, then get ready to enter the spotlight: as is OPM tradition, we're letting you decide what will be the ultimate Game Of The Year for 2015. As Highlander once said, there can be only one...



BLOODBORNE

Format PS4 Pub Sony Dev FromSoftware

Stepping away from Dark Souls, Hidetaka Miyazaki's latest takes his signature, rage-inspiring style and puts a PS4-powered rocket under it. Shifting the emphasis of the combat from defence to attack, Bloodborne's mechanics swiftly hooked us in, while the vile monstrosities scattered around Yharnham kept us horrified and enthralled.



FALLOUT 4

Format PS4 Pub Bethesda Dev Bethesda Game Studios

The Witcher 3 misses out by a whisker. *Fallout 4* has fallen slightly short of our lofty, Game Of The Forever hopes (did we hear you say it looks like *Fallout 3*? Hey, war never changes, right?), but it's still consuming all of our free time. It also gives us the chance to create our own apoc-ommunity. So that's every waking moment dedicated to *Fallout* from now on until spring, then. See you in the Wasteland.



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS III

Format PS4 Pub Activision Dev Treyarch

No matter what mode you play, *Call Of Duty* always manages to make the act of shooting humans, robots, zombies and – usually for us – the air, responsive and enjoyable. *Black Ops III* is no different, with the now obligatory minor tweaks not distracting from that core rush of running and gunning.



FUNNIEST MOMENT

LEGO DIMENSIONS

Format PS4 Pub Warner Bros Dev TT Games

In the most ludicrous case of mistaken identity that Batman's committed, he muddles up the brainless Scarecrow from *The Wizard Of Oz* with the psyche-obliterating one he usually thwarts. Cue much guffawing.

NO!

CRIMINAL GIRLS: INVITE ONLY

Format PS4 Pub NIS America Dev Nippon Ichi Software

We decided to skip reviewing *Criminal Girls* as soon as a quick Google image search showed us what was to come. Our precious eyes!

AT LONG LAST

SUPER MEAT BOY!

Format PS4 Pub Team Meat Dev Team Meat

Even with Big Boss' belated return, we couldn't look past *Super Meat Boy* finally making his PlayStation debut. It took five years, but it was worth the wait.

BEST ENDING

BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

Format PS4 Pub Warner Bros Dev Rocksteady

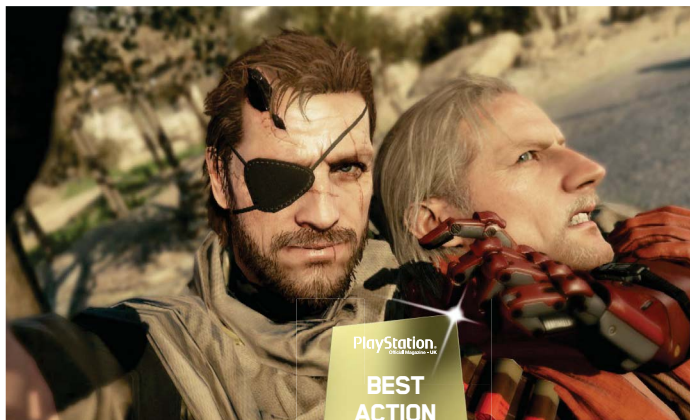
Arkham Knight's so good at ending the saga, it didn't have just one Earth-shattering closer, it had another for those who persevered to the 100% mark.

BEST DEATH

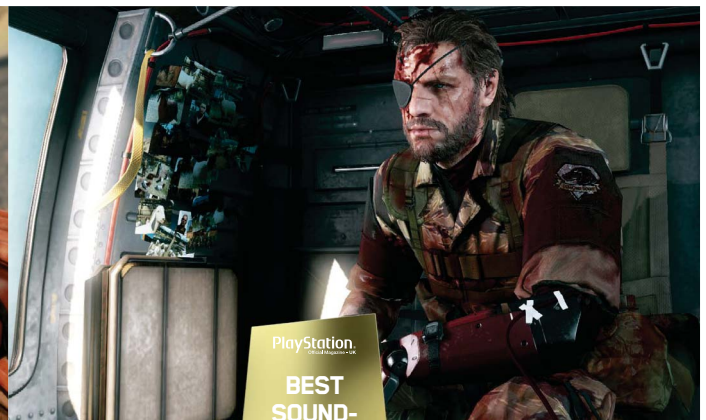
MATT, UNTIL DAWN

Format PS4 Pub Sony Dev Supermassive Games

Chin up, Matt – none of your friends manages to get off the hook, either. Your grisly death definitely wins, though. Blech. Hang in there, bud.



PlayStation
BEST
ACTION
ADVENTURE



PlayStation
BEST
SOUND-
TRACK

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

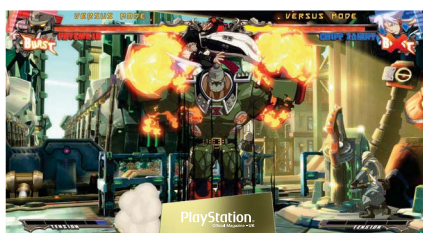
Format PS4 Pub Konami Dev Kojima Productions

Even with Kojima's record for experimenting, it's almost impossible not to discover something new every time you play MGS V. The redesigned controls now give you loads of freedom to explore between shooty or sneaky, and there's plenty of fun to be had when adapting on the fly. Utterly stunning.



As '80s as a neon sign wearing an ill-fitting white suit, Kojima's curated cassettes give MGS V a personality a typical orchestral score couldn't. Picking a highlight is unthinkable. What kind of monstrous madman would make you choose between Billy Idol, Joy Division and A-ha?

053



PlayStation
BEST
FIGHTER

GUILTY GEAR XRD -SIGN-

Format PS4 Pub Sony
Dev Arc System Works

For flawless fighting, Xrd has got to be 1st this year (confused yet?). It's well-balanced, satisfyingly complex and bloody gorgeous to boot. Executing an overdrive special results in a full 360-degree pan-around of what we foolishly assumed was a 2D fighter. Excuse us while we pick up our jaws.

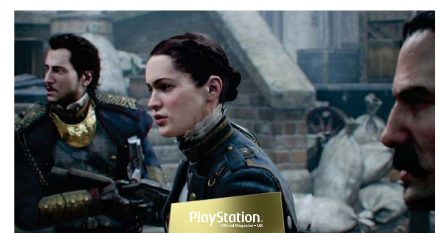


PlayStation
BEST
MULTI-
PLAYER

ROCKET LEAGUE

Format PS4 Pub Psyonix
Dev Psyonix

Lurking behind the vrooms and booms of Rocket League are wonderfully simple mechanics that will keep us hooked into 2016. Each mode has plenty of tactical depth — Duel is built for counter-attacking; Doubles dependent on communication — keeping Rocket League fresh, even when you're being annihilated.



PlayStation
BEST
VISUALS

THE ORDER: 1886

Format PS4 Pub Sony
Dev Ready At Dawn

Say what you want about the (lack of) gameplay, barmy story and the time needed to finish it, The Order: 1886 gave us plenty of gorgeous visuals to drool over. With moustaches that bristled like no other, let's hope the RAD 4.0 engine can power something worthy of its technical voodoo in the future.

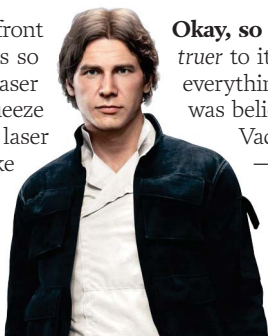
2015 AWARDS



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

Format PS4 Pub EA Dev DICE

One of the reasons Battlefront captures the spirit of Star Wars so brilliantly is its sterling laser sounds. The first time you squeeze the trigger and hear your laser zinging to its target, it feels like you're experiencing the joy of watching the originals for the first time. All together now: PEWPEWPEWPEWPEW!



Okay, so Batman: Arkham Knight was truer to its source material – while everything that happens in Gotham was believable, we don't remember Vader pogoing across Hoth – but this constantly covers our arms in goosebumps. Its look, sound and feel is the stuff of 38 years of hoping. *Actual dreams come true.*



GUITAR HERO LIVE

Format PS4 Pub Activision Dev FreeStyle Games

This year's Innovation award has two winners – and guess what, both of them just happen to be Guitar Hero Live. First of all, Freestyle reinvented music peripherals for the better with its game-changing, chord-creating split frets. And then it embraced the world of '90s music television nostalgia with the impeccable GHTV.

We were ready for a Rock Band reunion, but indifferent to another Guitar Hero gig. We were wrong: Live's fresh, grown-up take on the genre was just the tonic we needed after Mr Hawk made us rue comebacks forever. Official music videos? Rolling music shows? Live-action performances? It's odd on paper, but the finished article is exceptional.



BEST KILL

CASSIE CAGE, MORTAL KOMBAT X

Format PS4 Pub Warner Bros
Dev NetherRealm Studios

Mortal Kombat delights in chucking viscera at the screen, but what Cassie Cage's bloody selfie lacks in stomach-churning mutilation, it makes up for with internet comments.

BEST QUEST

BLOODY BARON, THE WITCHER 3

Format PS4 Pub Bandai Namco
Dev CD Projekt RED

The Bloody Baron isn't a typical villain. He's an (almost) charming man who's committed atrocious actions. Working through his messes showcases The Witcher's murky morality at its best.

BIGGEST LETDOWN

P.T. PULLED FROM PSN

Format PS4 Pub Konami Dev Kojima Productions

Konami's regrettable decision to yank P.T. off PSN means you'll never play Kojima's hall o' scares unless it's already on your hard drive.

TOUGHEST GAME

N++

Format PS4 Pub Metanet Software
Dev Metanet Software

You thought Bloodborne was tricky? Get ready for your thumbs to burn into dust with Metanet's punishing platformer. Even Meat Boy would weep...

BEST PS PLUS GAME

ROCKET LEAGUE

Format PS4 Pub Psyonix Dev Psyonix

While it's been a brilliant year for games getting their time in the warm glow of PS Plus, none has captured the imagination like Rocket League.



LIFE IS STRANGE

Format PS4 Pub Square Enix Dev Dontnod Entertainment

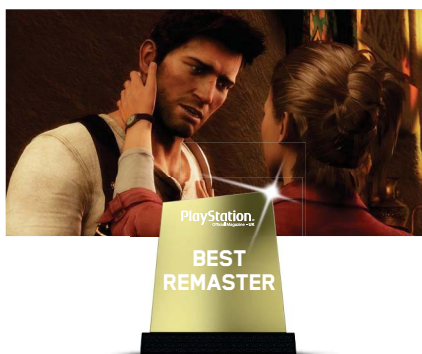
Dontnod left us a little trail of breadcrumbs this year. By trail, we mean five tantalisingly spaced episodes. And by breadcrumbs, we mean delicious time-travelling mystery/drama. Perfect pacing and sublime storytelling mean that many of us will circle back to do it all over again.



Some of Life Is Strange's most effective moments are the most innocuous, but there can be no denying that Episode 2's heart-wrenching conclusion rocked us like a hurricane. Good or bad, we live with the consequences — no second chances, no compromises, no mercy. We wouldn't have it any other way.



055



UNCHARTED: THE NATHAN DRAKE COLLECTION

Format PS4 Pub Sony
Dev Bluepoint

This could have won it purely on the strength of giving us another chance to play Uncharted 2, but Bluepoint did a brilliant job at tweaking everything above and below the surface to produce the definitive edition of the whole series. Axing the motion controls was a welcome decision as well.



EVERYBODY'S GONE TO THE RAPTURE

Format PS4 Pub Sony
Dev The Chinese Room

Rapture captures the atmosphere of the sleepy British village in a way that feels unnervingly real, from the politest request not to panic, to seeing a copy of Shropshire Magazine lying on a coffee table. Even the briefest glance at a screenshot shows the attention to detail in this quaint mystery.



LEGO DIMENSIONS' PORTAL LEVEL PACK

Format PS4 Pub Warner Bros
Dev TT Games

Don't get us wrong, we really do love Marty McFly. But how could Chell and her buddies Companion Cube and Sentry Turret not bag this award? Combining excellent toys with a truly fiendish level that felt like a genuine Portal 2 sequel, it's without doubt the Toys To Life highlight of the year.

2015 AWARDS



BEST TROPHY NAME

UNTIL DAWN: YOU LET THE WRONG ONE IN

Format PS4 Pub Sony
Dev Supermassive Games

We here at OPM Towers appreciate some humour with our horror, so Until Dawn's trophy pings had us giggling in between the gore-splodions.

BEST EXPANSION

DESTINY: THE TAKEN KING

Format PS4 Pub Activision Dev Bungie

The Taken King took the PS4's best shooter and made a proper game of it – fixing all its wrongs, injecting a story and laying the foundations for another 12 months of memories.

WORST DLC

EVOLVE

Format PS4 Pub 2K Dev Turtle Rock Studio

Evolve might give you new maps for free, but its DLC plan is convoluted at best. Having to buy two – yep, two – season passes for extra characters and monsters is confusingly excessive.

BEST CAMEO

SHUHEI YOSHIDA: SUPER TIME FORCE ULTRA

Format PS4 Pub Capybara Games
Dev Capybara Games

Journey's traveller is cool – but nothing beats playing as PlayStation's main man, Shuhei Yoshida. He popped up to vanquish foes with positivity and heart emojis.



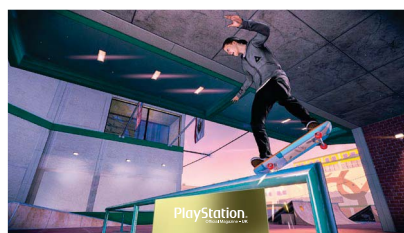
PlayStation.
BEST
PLATFORMER

TEARAWAY UNFOLDED

Format PS4 Pub Sony Dev Media Molecule



Like its PS Vita entry, Tearaway Unfolded is a fantastic advert for every creative thing you can do with a Sony console. But this isn't just a mere port. Tearaway on PS4 sees areas getting rejigs to make them larger, meaning there are multiple surprises for returning fans.



PlayStation.
WORST
COMEBACK

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 5

Format PS4 Pub Activision
Dev Robomodo

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5 doesn't earn this unenviable accolade because it's terribly designed, looks like cartoon vomit and is borderline unplayable. All of which it is. Or even because it's drivel that's being hawked at £50. Which it is. The reason it scoops this particular award is down to the fact that PS1 originals offer more than this current iteration, *in 2015*.



PlayStation.
BEST
ONLINE

FINAL FANTASY XIV: HEAVENSWARD

Format PS4 Pub Square Enix
Dev Square Enix

This might be one for the FFXIV diehards – you need to complete A Realm Reborn before you can start Heavensward – but it just adds more brilliant stuff to our favourite MMO. New character classes, huge areas to adventure through and flying chocobos make it an essential add-on.



Format PS4 **Pub** Frictional Games
Dev Frictional Games



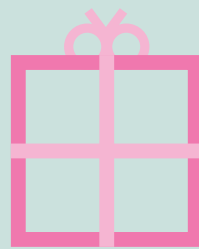
Format PS4 **Pub** Konami
Dev PES Productions



Format PS4 **Pub** Sony
Dev Supermassive Games

The image shows the cover of the PlayStation Official Magazine - UK. The background is a vibrant red. A large, gold-colored rectangular area dominates the center, featuring a massive white question mark. The PlayStation logo and the text 'Official Magazine - UK' are positioned at the top of the gold area. There are bright, starburst-like light effects in the top right and bottom left corners of the gold area.

Will it be The Witcher 3? Fallout 4? Batman: Arkham Knight? Dying Light? Battlefield Hardline? Tell us your pick before 1 Dec at: bit.ly/OPM_GOTY2015



OPM'S CHRISTMAS BUYER'S GUIDE

Have the merriest of holidays with PlayStation pressies for all

Gather up, one and all, for another Christmas, OPM-style. We'll let the rest of the mag point you towards the games and Blu-rays you should be scribbling

on your wishlist this year — instead, these pages are concerned with the gear you need to supplement your gaming diet for the ultimate wintry PlayStation celebration.



MUST-HAVE TECH

The essential gear for the PlayStation lifestyle

Sony Bravia KD49X8307CSU

Delivering 49 inches of pure PS4 gaming pleasure, the Bravia's 4K Ultra HD resolution will leave hearts in your square eyes. It's a smart TV, so it'll include apps for Netflix, BBC iPlayer and Amazon Prime Instant Video. Just pray it never becomes sentient.

currys.co.uk



£799

Real Arcade Pro 4 Kai

Nothing says Christmastime like getting together with the family and beating the snot out of your siblings. Keep it strictly virtual (for your mum's sake) with HORI's super-precise fightstick for PS4 and PS3. Touch Pad functionality, and Program Mode, too: more than enough to get your Hadouken! on.

amazon.co.uk



£112.45

Elgato Game Capture HD60

While PS4 is more than capable of recording and streaming gameplay, thank you very much, we have to begrudgingly admit that the Game Capture HD60 has our parallelogram pipped. It offers stunning 1080p, while 60fps footage flows with consummate ease into your online feed of choice. Plus, it's tiny. Lookit the baby!



£139.95

elgato.com

PS4 1TB Edition With Nathan Drake Collection

Yes, there are some staggeringly tempting 500GB bundle deals knocking about at the moment, but we like to look long-term. For us, the future is 1TB, and with a hi-res Nate in tow, no less. Been working out, bro? You look good.

smythstoys.com



£314.99

20th Anniversary DualShock 4

This is a truly OG piece of kit: Original Grey, of course. Didn't win the 20th Anniversary console in our twin-mag issue's competition? Console yourself (or a friend) with this retro recolour of the best controller money can buy – and check out that multicoloured PS button. amazon.co.uk



£45.49

Thrustmaster T80 Racing Wheel

Nitro boosts! Explosions! Realism! Driving games have it all, but if you want to shift the immersion up a gear, you need a wheel. Enter the Thrustmaster T80. It's equipped with official firmware, linear resistance and a killer set of pedals. The rubber's a-burnin' already. argos.co.uk



£69.99

Rock Band 4 Pro Cymbals

Complete your sweet Rock Band 4 setup by perching the Crash, Ride and Hi-Hat cymbals upon your drum kit (and unlocking Pro mode in-game). The responsive design means the game will register the dynamics of every epic solo. And they're sound-absorbing, so the neighbours can't complain. store.madcatz.com



£32.43

Tactical Assault Commander 4 mouse and keyboard

Lining up headshots can sometimes be all fingers and thumbs. Give yourself the advantage in online FPS with a PS4-compatible wired mouse and keypad. More "hell no" than gung-ho? The mouse-sensitive 'snipe mode' will ensure you're a happy camper. Sneaky. amazon.co.uk



£86.35

Star Wars X-wing Pilot Headset

It won't trump the Official PlayStation 4 Wireless 2.0 headset for quality or comfort, but this budget, lightweight offering is the must-have audio add-on of the season thanks to a certain orange jumpsuit X-wing theme – and the small matter of Star Wars Battlefront's PS4 release... turtlebeach.com



£34.99

BUYER'S GUIDE



WEARABLE GEAR

Show your true colours with these Sony styles



£34.99

Original PlayStation Christmas jumper

Christmas, 1995. Unwrapping a brand new PS1. Imagine you could recreate that magical moment... Squint really hard, and the Original PlayStation Christmas jumper looks a bit like one. It's classic grey, and all the elements are there: D-pad, buttons, reindeer... Wait, your PS1 didn't have reindeer? numskull.co.uk

Jet Set Radio – Beat (Reloaded) tee

After the disappointment of Pro Skater 5 this year, let's pay tribute to the cowabunga classics. Put the smile back on a pal's face by gifting them a vibrant JSR tee. Bonus points if you use a permanent marker to cel-shade them when they fall asleep after Christmas lunch. insertcoinclimbing.com

£22.00



£27.68

Stormtrooper hoodie

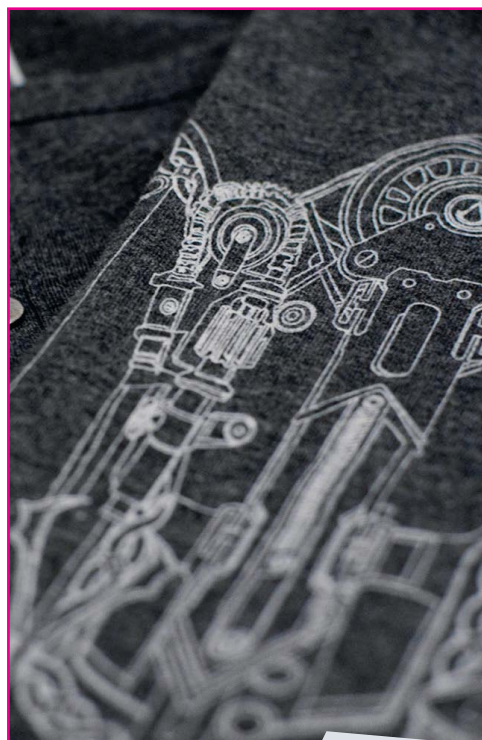
This is the hoodie you're looking for. Officially licensed, it features a hood that zips up to fully encase you in iconic trooper armour. Don't worry, you won't be bouncing blindly off the Death Star's walls – the hood has mesh eyes, to keep your peepers on those pesky rebels. thinkgeek.com



£19.99

Borderlands The Pre-Sequel vault logo premium tee

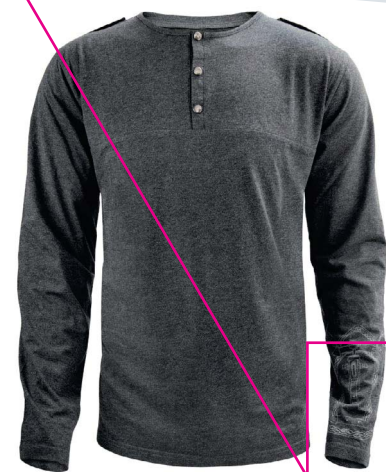
Vault logo... Vault logo... Cherry. Aaaargh! Jinx.com's slim-fit, lightweight jersey tee brings back memories of long nights spent spinning the one-armed bandit at Moxxi's fine establishment. Now you can finally pin down that elusive third symbol – it's right on your chest. Jackpot. jinx.com



£19.46

Assassin's Creed Syndicate Hidden Blade T-shirt

Keep your most versatile weapon at hand with Ubi's long-sleeve T-shirt, featuring an understated print of Syndicate's Assassin's Gauntlet on the left sleeve. Nobody will suspect a thing as you slip through the crowds in subtle heather grey colour and soft cotton. *Requiescat in pace*, boring T-shirts. store.ubiworkshop.com





Hazuki Shennmue leather jacket

You're a connoisseur of the finer things in life - open-world 3D brawlers, quality rims on your hog, and now expensive leather jackets. Don't deny yourself the luxury of this iconic Ryo-inspired piece, complete with sumptuous detailing. After all, it can get chilly down on the docks.

insertcoinclimbing.com

£80.00



£34.99

Fallout Christmas jumper

Real wastelanders know you need your winter woollies, so what better way to prove your citizenship credentials than with a Vault-Tec certified Christmas jumper. We're still deciding which of the OPM team will be testing its radiation protection qualities.

game.co.uk



Sonic The Hedgehog socks

Wear your Sonic The Hedgehog heart on your... feet? Those tootsies will be so comfortable with this triple pack that you'll have a jolly tough time getting them to go fast. Now if only Sega would race back to the drawing board and come up with a decent Sonic game.

game.co.uk

£9.99

PlayStation black varsity jacket

Gimme a P! Gimme an L! Gimme an A! Um, we could be here a while. Let your threads do the cheerleading for you and rep Team PlayStation in this dapper varsity jacket. Swish button-themed lining makes this one a winner.

gear.playstation.com

£60.00



£34.99

Innovator (Portal) backpack

Transport that delicious cake in style with this minimalist backpack. It can also lug around a 17-inch laptop, if you really want to sacrifice precious cake real estate. It's super-strong and water-resistant, so feel free to whizz it through all sorts of wormholes (Portal gun not included).

gametee.co.uk

Use code
OPMXMAS10
for 10% discount
off your entire
gametee.co.uk
order!
Valid until
1 Jan 2016

BUYER'S GUIDE



STOCKING FILLERS

Cheap and cheerful trinkets from the top of Santa's sack

PlayStation controller cufflinks

Straying more than ten feet from the holy quartet of **A**, **B**, **X** and **O** is enough for us to break out in an itchy rash.

This can make attending swanky events problematic. Pop these bad boys in your shirt cuffs, and you'll soon feel in control again.

numskull.co.uk

£14.99



Life Is Strange vinyl stickers

The time-bending extravaganza has come to an end, but chilling in Chloe's room doesn't have to. Recreate that anti-establishment teenage sentiment with these vinyl LIS graffiti stickers. Laptops, notebooks, dormitory whiteboards: jazz up anything. All you need now for a merry Christmas is a freak snowstorm.

redbubble.com

£1-2



£6.99

Star Wars Cookie Cutters

Lord Vader isn't so scary when you're chomping on his spicy head. Gingerbread houses are a little twee, so whip up a batch of delicious Boba Fets instead using this set of six Star Wars cookie cutters. Add plenty of baking Yoda for Chewie chocolate chip cookies.

amazon.com

£12.62



Batman multitool

Some men just want to watch the world burn. Some men just want to open a beer and assemble flat-pack furniture. Hey, we're all different. The Batman multitool combines bottle-opener, crosshead and flathead screwdriver into one sleek keyfob. Finally, you can be the hero Ikea deserves.

iwantoneofthose.com



£4.99 EACH

Candles (Sea salt ice cream, Snake, Quantum tunnel)

Mmm, smells like Big Boss... Gametee has fulfilled all our wildest fantasies by distilling Snake's signature tang into a sophisticated candle. There are 12 videogame-inspired scents to choose from, and all are made from 100% natural soy wax. Candlelit dinners with Meryl have never been so aromatic.

gametee.co.uk



£8.99

Transformers Autobot mug

Of all the things a robot could disguise itself as, a drinking receptacle doesn't seem like the most thrilling choice. Nevertheless, the Autobot mug will cheerfully receive 350ml of burning hot liquid directly into its facial cavity, keeping tea at the Optimus temperature.

iwantoneofthose.com



KILLER COLLECTIBLES

The cool kit every gamer needs in their pad



Funko Vault Boy Pop! Vinyl

We're giving this bobble-headed bauble a big ol' OPM thumbs up. By our squinting, tongue-out, thumb-guided approximation, the Funko Vault Boy Pop! Vinyl stands about nine centimetres tall. Just kidding. We looked up the specs on the website. Disclaimer: we can't promise he'll survive the apocalypse. amazon.co.uk

£10.50



£50

'Desert' Journey fine art print

A gorgeous collector's piece to commemorate your odyssey. Float your way over to the PlayStation Gear store and grab one of only 300 hand-numbered prints. It won't be a white Christmas with a desert vista adorning your wall, but you couldn't wish for a better reminder of man's goodwill. gear.playstation.com



6 MONTHS
£107

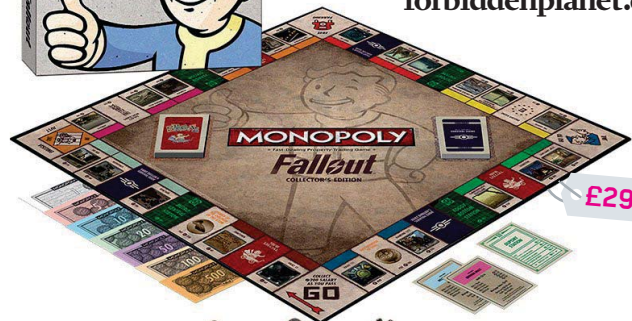
1 YEAR
£206

Loot Crate subscription

You're not addicted to geeky curios. You could stop at any time. Now, if you wanted to. Whoops, another package just arrived. Well, it'd be awfully rude to ignore the desk-buddies, comics and wearable swag that Loot Crate has hand-selected. Only £18 a month? We'll take two subscriptions. lootcrate.com

Monopoly: Fallout Collector's Edition

This Christmas isn't just about Star Wars – it's about Star Wars and Fallout. In this tabletop game, chance and community chest cards make way for the Vault Dweller's Survival Guide and S.P.E.C.I.A.L. cards, while houses are shacks and hotels are vaults. Bagsy the Vault Boy playing piece. forbiddenplanet.com



£29.99



EXTENDED UNIVERSE BOOKS

Go deeper with the games you love most



£10.44
EBOOK AVAILABLE

Star Wars Battlefront: Twilight Company

Want to play hero without getting decapitated by trolls in X-wings? Swap TIE fighters for tie-ins and jump into Alexander Freed's Star Wars Battlefront: Twilight Company. The novel's renegade outfit, Twilight Company, takes on the dark heart of the Empire from down in the trenches. amazon.co.uk



£29.99
EACH

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Pore over Elder Scrolls lore in Titan Books' lovingly rendered tomes. Stuffed with more landscapes, factions and dragons than you can shake a battleaxe at, Skyrim Volume 1 and Tales Of Tamriel Volumes 1 and 2 make perfect gifts for the special warrior in your life. titanbooks.com

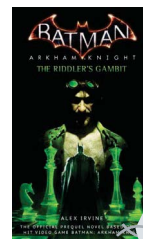


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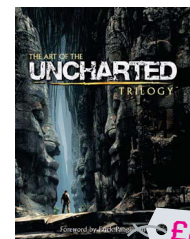
With Syndicate's razor-sharp blades still fresh in our hearts, minds and other appendages, there's a brand new assassin on the scene. In the officially licensed comic book series, Charlotte de la Cruz stumbles into Assassin life, but is soon free-running with the pros and taking down Templars. titan-comics.com



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REVIEWS



72 ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE

Prepare for double trouble as the twins slice and dice on PS4.

OPM SCORES

**GOLD
AWARD**

PlayStation
Official Magazine - UK

GOLD AWARD

Awarded to a game that's brilliantly executed on every level, combining significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics and lasting appeal.

**EDITOR'S
AWARD**

PlayStation
Official Magazine - UK

EDITOR'S AWARD

Not at the very highest echelon, but this is a game that deserves recognition and special praise based on its ambition, innovation or other notable achievement.

10 INCREDIBLE

The kind of phenomenal experience rarely seen in a console generation.

9 OUTSTANDING

Unreservedly brilliant - this should be in every collection.

8 VERY GOOD

A truly excellent game, marred by just a few minor issues.

7 GOOD

A great concept unfulfilled or the familiar done well, but still well worth playing.

6 DECENT

Fun in parts, flawed in others, but more right than wrong.

5 AVERAGE

What you expect and little more, this is for devotees only.

4 BELOW AVERAGE

Any bright ideas are drowning in a sea of bugs or mediocrity.

3 POOR

A seriously flawed game with little merit on any level.

2 AWFUL

Disgraceful: the disc would be more beneficial as a coaster.

1 HORRIFIC

Own this and you'll be swiftly, justifiably, exiled from society.

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YAKUZA 5 76 | WWE 2K16 78 | LIFE IS STRANGE S1E5 - POLARIZED 79 | NEED FOR SPEED 80
DIVINITY: ORIGINAL SIN 82 | DRIVECLUB BIKES 84 | TALES OF ZESTIRIA 86 | FALLOUT 4 88



This hunk is Firebreak, a flamethrower-wielding specialist not allowed near flammable materials.



"RUNNING BECOMES AS VITAL AS GUNNING IN EVERY MODE. YOU START TO ALMOST FLY THROUGH MAPS."

BLACK ON TRACK

@bentyrer

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS III



Shooting juggernaut continues to be top of the ops



FORMAT PS4
ALSO ON PS3
ETA OUT NOW
PUB ACTIVISION
DEV TREYARCH

Yes, it's back. And frankly, Black Ops III is, well, bonkers. This is a game in which the ability to make soldiers vomit themselves to death rubs shoulders with running through a '30s noir-style zombie adventure as Jeff Goldblum. You can't say this COD isn't trying hard to fly its freak flag on the surface, but how deep does the sense of reinvention run?

Well, when it comes to the multiplayer, there are two major tweaks to the formula. Advanced Warfare introduced double jumps; Black Ops III pilfers them and whacks in the ability to wall-run. Leap near a wall and you'll start scampering across it, until gravity loses patience and dumps you off. It's a critical part of this COD's charm, as running becomes as vital as gunning in every single game mode. It's also just as enjoyable, as you start to almost fly through maps.

SPECIAL FORCES

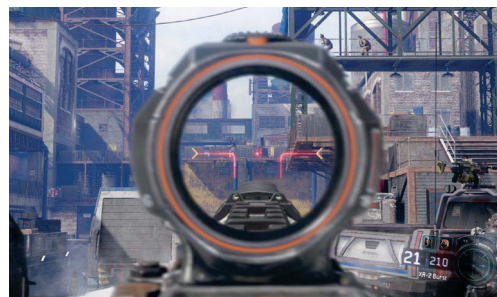
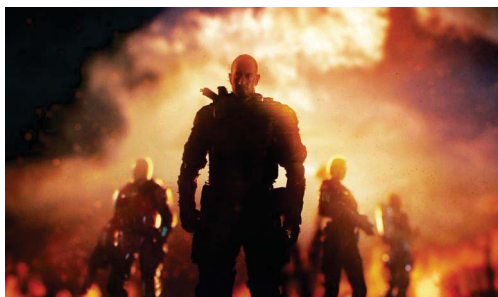
Black Ops III's other major renovation to its colossally popular online arm is ditching genro-soldiers for specialists. There are nine classes – a few are unlocked from the get-go, others via levelling up – and each specialist has two abilities to pick between. Once charged, you trigger your chosen ability with **L1** and **R1**, a feeling that'll be familiar to Destiny fans. They don't *drastically* change the way matches are played, but discovering your favourite will eat up your first few evenings on the battlegrounds.

Even with these tweaks, online multiplayer still feels like coming home at Christmas. There's the reassuringly twitchy feel to firing guns, many a spot perfect for setting up camp,





Right This ominous-looking group needs to be tracked down. Hey, sounds like a job for you.



Left Looking down the scopes to get the perfect photo? No, just shooting people.

and the criminally addictive drip feed of toys. The changes fit in seamlessly – it's as if you've always been able to shoot a gun that fires electricity while jogging along the side of a house.

But, while the sense of control over your character is the best it's ever been in COD, the level design has trouble keeping up. Although the first few rounds of maps will have you spotting exhilarating new ways to get around, it quickly becomes apparent the game can't think so fast. Plenty of areas are barred-off behind invisible walls – for example, the slanted church roof in Infected. They're easily reached, with no apparent reason for being inaccessible. It's monumentally frustrating that movement allows you a greater level of exploration and then the game artificially locks off certain areas.

But while the competitive multiplayer changes are evolution, not revolution, the campaign's overhaul to focus on co-op in every facet of its design is much bolder. Key to this new approach is the Safehouse, a playable lobby area that gives you time to choose your loadout, unlock new

Cyber Cores (your campaign super moves) and pick a mission. But the Netflix-inspired episode select, with every level unlocked from the start, isn't a huge game-changer and just gives you a way to keep up with friends.

ALONE SHARK

Once you're into a mission, it's quickly apparent that opting to push ahead on your tod is not the way to play. Take the mission Hypocentre, which is cannily designed for teams, but vein-poppingly infuriating as a solo player. Mid-mission, you're tasked with taking on waves of enemies while shooting out a power core and placing explosives. With a team, two take crowd control, one handles the power and the other runs in to sort out the explosives. Alone, you die. Lots.

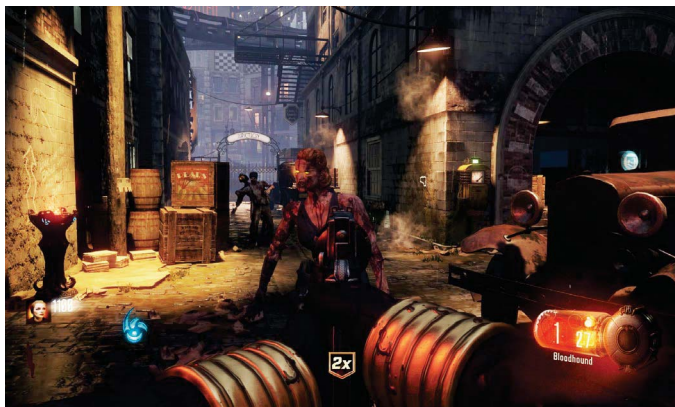
Play it in co-op and it's the most fascinating campaign COD's boasted in some time, as set-pieces feel less reliant

on forcing your way through to checkpoints and more about balancing play styles between mates. Levels also benefit from extended lengths, with the runtime around the 12-hour mark. There are still blatant issues with invisible lines needed to trigger enemies or infinite spawning waves that, again, feel like a punishment for those going lone wolf.

Even the narrative wants you to have friends on your journey. Its story drops you into the shoes of your customised soldier – I opt for the badass woman who chomps cigars like a mid-'80s Schwarzenegger – who, along with your two partners, is hunting a team of soldiers who've gone rogue. So far, so COD, but Black Ops III's narrative is more surreal than it initially lets on, exploring themes of identity between the shooting faces off.

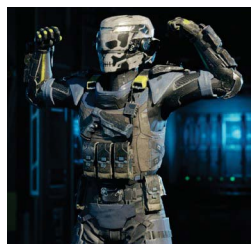
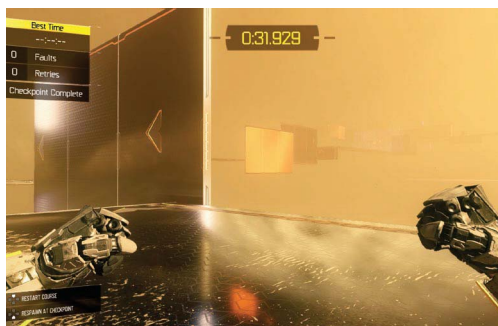
It's more compelling than the typical shock and awe (or bore, depending on the entry) COD

"I PLUMP FOR THE BADASS WOMAN WHO CHOMPS CIGARS LIKE MID-'80S ARNIE."



Above Zombies enjoys its maddest, fattest entry to date.

Right The excellent Free Run mode is part time trial, part tutorial.



Above End of game taunts won't win you friends, but it will shut rivals up.

campaigns... and stretches it to breaking point. Unfortunately, the overall plot is an incoherent blur of moments that don't quite make a satisfying whole.

STORY FLOPS

Very few characters are good company and their relationships change with little explanation, leaving you scratching your head. This is exacerbated by the COD jargon that's out in full force, so multiple playthroughs are a must and the connection between events tend to make little sense. While it's an admirable, experimental step, and one that's preferable to the blandly uninspiring Advanced Warfare, it feels more like a series of ideas than a cohesive narrative. Its flaws will likely confuse as many as it engages. At least the shooting's great.

The campaign's only part of the picture, though. This year's entry has plenty of other modes to keep you hooked.

There's the returning Zombies mode, with its brutal difficulty and a setup that maintains the high standard of weirdness. There's also a short, Mirror's Edge-lite Free Run time trial mode, and one other gametype that only becomes accessible if you finish every campaign level, which I *strongly* recommend you do, pronto.

All in, it's a fascinating entry in the annual barrage of COD, one that's as memorable for its moments of insanity as it is for tinkering with the core mechanics. Not everything works, and solo players should be wary of its emphasis on having chums, but Black Ops III brings a bit of the bizarre, and is all the better for it.

VERDICT

Despite some questionable multiplayer level design and an absurd story, Black Ops III is a return to form for COD – so long as you play it with friends rather than alone. **Ben Tyrer**

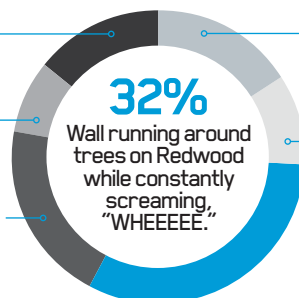
THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... BLACK OPS III

14% Trying to work out just what's going on in the story.

8% Figuring out where you know "what's-his-face" from.

20% Deciding which specialist will represent you on the online slaughter fields.



16% Trying to earn some extra XP in Combat Immersion in the Safehouse.

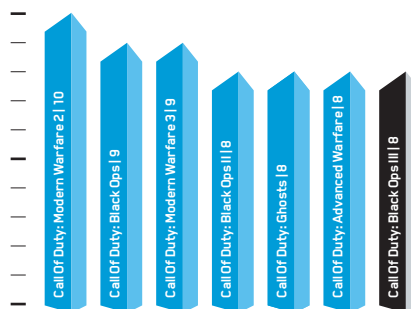
10% Wishing there were more courses to glide through in Free Run mode.

ALSO ON PLAYSTATION 3



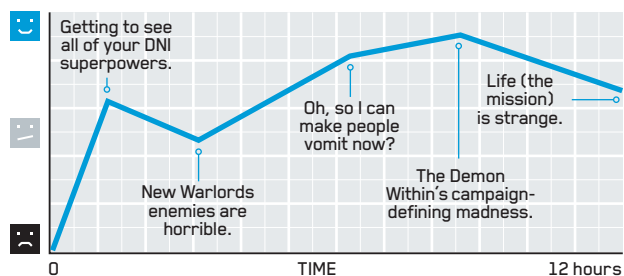
We've yet to get our hands on a PS3 copy of Black Ops III, but last-gen players should know there is no campaign mode in this version. A visual downgrade relative to the PlayStation 4 game was always a given, but the screens we have seen are far from flattering...

SERIESOGRAPHY



Black Ops III is the most engaging COD since the last Black Ops, but its issues puts it on a par with recent COD outings.

COMPEL-O-GRAPH



IS IT BETTER THAN?



YES

Better movement, more content and less Spacey makes this a resounding step-up from last year's entry.



YES

Hardline's story makes more sense than Blops III, but Call of Duty's other modes offer bigger rushes.



YES

A greater focus in its campaign and the fluid movement makes Treyarch's shooter the better co-op package.



Syndicate's combat might feel monotonous, but it looks brutal. He won't be walking that off.

072

LIKE THE DICKENS

@itsjensim



ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE

Not top of the Tower, but too cool to care

Let's not mince words here: Assassin's Creed Unity was difficult. Difficult for the fans; difficult for Ubisoft; difficult for everyone. We wanted Assassin's Creed Syndicate to return, top hat in hand and heart in mouth, to ask us to reconsider. We wanted an apology, of sorts. Well, guess what? It doesn't give us one – and that's okay.

There's nothing cringing or self-effacing about Syndicate. It goes blades-deep and hell for leather, launching twin torpedoes Jacob and Evie into an obscenely colourful world. Carriage chaos and gang wars are par for the course, as are some of the most macabre assassinations we've ever seen. The main villain has a *handlebar moustache*, for Pete's sake. It's ridiculous, and brilliantly so. Sadly, this don't-give-a-damn attitude results in more of the sloppiness that Creed has previously displayed – but the game's unabashed air is undeniably exhilarating.

So, too, is traversing sun- and rain-soaked Victorian London, Cockney chatter floating up to the rooftops on which you're so carefully perched. Reaching the dizzying heights of the city is a breeze thanks to the up and down freerun buttons introduced in Unity, and Syndicate has



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB UBISOFT
DEV UBISOFT QUEBEC

thrown a rope launcher into the bargain – it'll whizz you across London's wide streets with a flick of your wrist.

As a result, scrambling up roof tiles and zipping into side streets feels natural, though it takes me a while to stop teetering precariously on edges not designed for parkour. The flow's stilted at first, but is gratifying once mastered.

LONDON BRAWLING

Syndicate piles on yet more sublime anarchy with new tools. The most modern era in the franchise thus far means six-shooters, voltaic bombs, trains and carriages to play with. "Wanton Destruction" is encouraged: cause enough carnage in your carriage by using and left thumbstick to ram everything in sight, and you earn a perk. And underground Fight Clubs exist

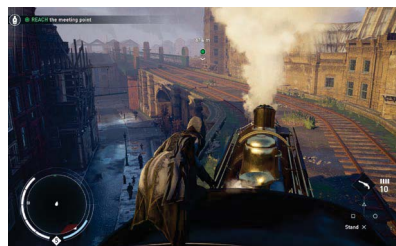
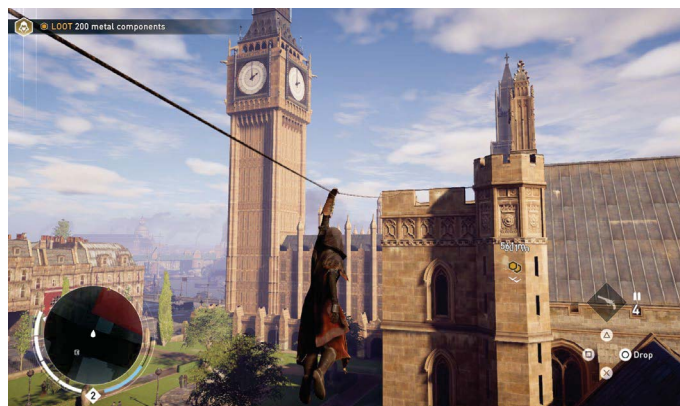
(oops, no they don't) with the sole purpose of letting the twins get their bloodlust on.

It's not all brutality, though. Syndicate's story and cast are engaging, including an affable Alexander Graham Bell and a stylish, tea-drinking Templar villain. Impeccably written siblings Jacob and Evie might be twins, but they have distinct playstyles and personalities. Jacob gees up horses by cooing, "Who's a good horse?" Evie prefers a guttural scream and a lash of the whip. Damn, girl.

If only hand-to-hand combat was as diverse. Mashing the attack button is a repetitive slog, seemingly disconnected from your inputs and lasting an age. Tedium swiftly morphs into frustration once you escape conflict and attempt to hurriedly loot a crate or hijack a carriage. Hitting the multi-purpose in Syndicate is like

Right Balancing atop a viewpoint and looking down at foggy London is the stuff of poetry.

Below Playing with the rope launcher is one of the game's best elements.



Above All aboard! This locomotive is your base for murderous operations.

playing Russian roulette; if your luck isn't in, it's all over in those few seconds it takes you to accidentally pick up a corpse. Gutted – literally.

GLITCHIN' A RIDE

I manage six gloriously naive hours in Syndicate's London before I manage to find glitches. Suddenly, I'm spotting the cracks in the code: my victim has fallen but a throwing knife is still hovering in the air, and a policeman clips through a carriage during the line, "You've botched another one, sergeant." The irony is painful. Not as painful, however, as bugs actually impacting gameplay.

Graphical hiccups are amusing, unresponsive button prompts are less so. One or two side-missions become farcical as I try in vain to tackle a target with a **○** button that's suddenly gone all coy. It's not enough to ruin the thrill of kidnapping criminals, but it's just not cricket.

But Syndicate doesn't play by the rules. It's an Assassin's I can accuse of many things, but it's certainly not shy about what it is – a game determined to impress with an exquisite environment, movement that's rarely less than exhilarating, and plenty more of the same stealthy, stabby thrills.

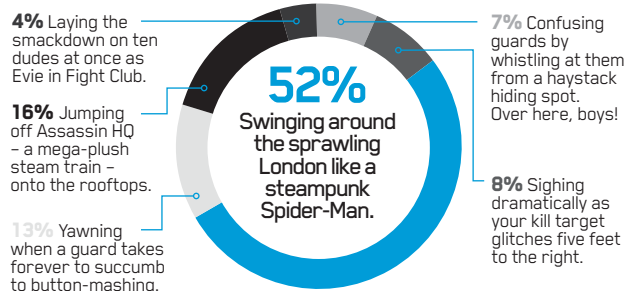
Like a carriage gone rogue, the franchise keeps barreling on and on, with little regard for the damage it does to itself. It's alarming to watch but, in Syndicate at least, electrifying to play. Fast-paced, more than a little reckless and fiercely beautiful, Assassin's Creed's long-awaited visit to London is, in a word, unapologetic.

VERDICT

Ludicrous fun in which charismatic characters shine. Combat and code, however, do not. Fans of the series will appreciate it for what it is, but Syndicate doesn't repair all of Unity's damage. **Jen Simpkins**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... AC SYNDICATE

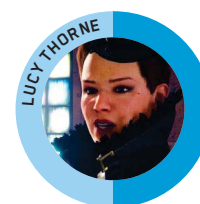


SECOND OPINION THE LONDON LOOK



It still has a few lingering hallmarks of old Creed, but Syndicate's London brings an infectious sense of fun back to the series. Evie and Jacob are the most likeable Assassins in years and the chaos of carriages, rival gangs and the addition of the rope launcher makes this a worthy slice of Templar-stabbing action. Criminally enjoyable. **Louise Blain**

FRIENDS & ENEMIES



The sassy Templar has a killer fashion sense to match her savage skills.

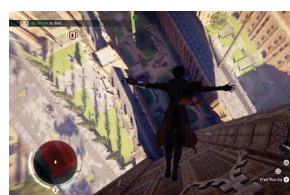


He's the amiable fellow behind voltaic bombs and that rope launcher.



Poor Charlie is fretting about finishing his novel when you bump into him.

LOVING/HATING



FREQUENT FLYER

Freefalling into haystacks has never been so picturesque. There's something magical about seeing London's landmarks whip past you.



CLIPPED WINGS

The euphoria doesn't last long when glitches break immersion. This bobby is immersed, though... in the wall of a police carriage.

IS IT BETTER THAN?



NO

Creative director Marc-Alexis Côté drew inspiration from AC II – but the series has yet to top it.



YES

Oh please, no more monochrome "liberté". Give me Syndicate, or give me death!



NO

Syndicate just isn't quite as slick as the swashbuckling, high-sea hijinks of Black Flag.

The live-action scenes are great for players and observers alike.



074

RAVES OF OUR LIVES

@Pelloki



GUITAR HERO LIVE

While my Rock Band gently weeps

Forget what you know about rhythm action. Guitar Hero Live changes everything, almost all of it for the better. Its release marks the first true head-to-head of last generation's two best music game studios (Harmonix, creator of the first two Guitar Hero games and then the Rock Band series; and Freestyle Games, developer of the hugely underappreciated DJ Hero franchise), and this battle of the bands has a shock result – while Rock Band 4 is an extremely solid offering, Guitar Hero Live is the, ahem, pick of the pair.

The new peripheral plays a big part in that. Rock Band 4's support of old gear is to be applauded, but put convenience and cost to one side and Guitar Hero's new kit obliterates its competition. Its two rows of three frets are more than just a gimmick: they're a game-changer, identifying and correcting the shortfalls of the old plastic guitar setups, allowing for 'proper' chords and satisfying dancing between 'strings' during epic solos.

Sure, it's still pretend guitar, but when you're barring twin frets and shaping actual chords with your hand, you feel like you're connecting with the music in ways that the old five-colour Fisher Price way can't offer. The new guitar isn't about bleeding more money out of people – it's about the most exciting fingering



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ALSO ON PS3
ETA OUT NOW
PUB ACTIVISION
DEV FREESTYLE GAMES

since that second date fumble in the back row of the cinema. Live's fresh kit helps push the genre forward into brave new areas, and once you've sampled its redesigned guitar highways and note-matching, you'll never wish to return to the old ways.

LIVE AND KICKING

The fretboard isn't the only thing that's been sliced in two – the game itself has been neatly carved into 'Live' and 'TV' modes. The former is Guitar Hero's campaign, and sees you thrown into festival events (complete with DJ preamble that recalls Crash FM from Burnout Paradise) to play sets as part of various different live-action bands. It sounds garish but is a masterstroke

of design – it turns out it's much easier to get sucked into a performance when you're feeling like part of the act rather than watching cartoonish dolls prancing about on a stage.

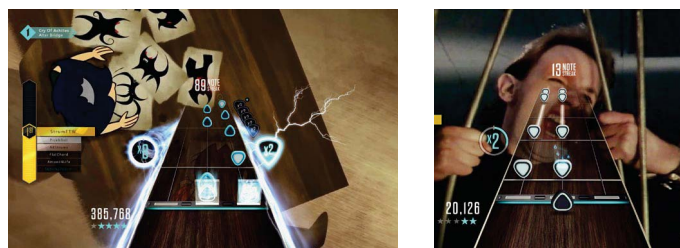
More than that, it gives you a very clear form of modal feedback. Play well and the crowd and your band will compliment you. Cock it up and expect more negative reactions. So-so performance? The footage begins pulsing to let you know you're losing the audience. It means clutter such as skill meters are stripped off the screen, enabling you to focus purely on the thrill of the musical performance.

GHTV is where things get complicated. It's here where the meat of the game lives,

"LIVE'S NEW GUITAR PUSHES THE GENRE FORWARD INTO BRAVE NEW AREAS."

Right GHTV's music is all accompanied by the official music videos.

Below The new note types feel like much truer representations of real chords.



Above One gripe with GHTV? There are no Hero Power-free leaderboards.

but while you're free to replay the Live mode's 42 songs as much as your heart desires, GHTV's 200-strong setlist isn't quite at your fingertips.

Instead, two (and soon to become three) rolling 24-hour channels play host to different programmes of various themes: Metal Hour, Sounds Like Rock, GHTV: Pop, etc. You pick a channel that takes your fancy (it's all handled server-side, so you need to be online) and start playing to earn XP and cash.

FRET SEMATARY

Why cash? Because cash lets you buy Hero Powers (score multipliers, invincibility and so on), profile upgrades and Plays. It's the last one that's crucial – these are the tokens that allow you to play any of GHTV's library whenever you want.

Limited Plays means you don't have complete control over the entire library, true, but before you beat Guitar Hero Live with the microtransaction

hate stick (for you can buy Plays with real money), consider this: GHTV forever encourages you to discover new songs, is fairly generous with its cash-earning algorithms, and is constructed in a way that means you never have to buy DLC again. Ever. Songs are added for free, and you needn't pay a penny to access them in the channels, or on demand – if you're smart with your Plays.

What we said last month still stands: if you've got old PS3 peripherals and jam-ready friends to hand, Rock Band 4 is a strong choice. But Guitar Hero Live is the better game: a daring step forward for the series that deserves to succeed.

VERDICT

Don't lament the GHTV library's setup – surrender yourself to the music and Guitar Hero Live injects fresh excitement into a genre that had seemingly peaked. One of 2015's biggest surprises. **Matthew Pellett**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... GUITAR HERO LIVE

4% "Is the bass player giving me the eye? Totally! Er, right?"

20% Getting finger-twisted over the new note patterns.

10% Stretching your hand muscles to prevent cramp from setting in.

33% Getting so absorbed with the Live footage you start 'performing'.

25% Discovering awesome new songs in GHTV.

8% Rolling your eyes at another instance of Chop Suey on GHTV.

STAT PACK

42 | **24** | **6** | **70**

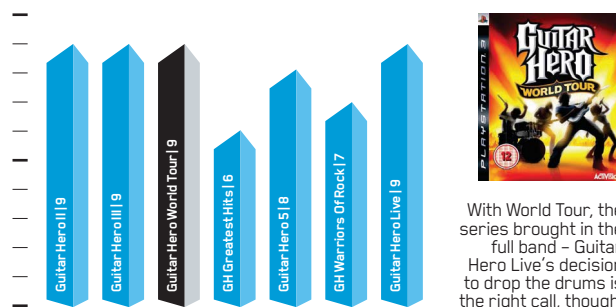
Number of songs included in the GH Live portion of the game, free to play any time once unlocked.

Hours of unlimited access to all of GHTV's songs if you purchase the Party Pass.

Frets on the new guitar, split into two rows of three. Your fingers get one hell of a workout.

Extra tracks are promised for the GHTV library before the year's out, spread over weekly drops.

SERIESOGRAPHY



TROPHY CABINET



MULTIPLAYER



Connect a second guitar and two of you can play side-by-side, plus you can plug in a mic for warbling as well. But traditional multiplayer is limited – instead, GHTV's party trick sees it building persistent, dynamic leaderboards with players' scores.



Yakuza 4's Revelations return, and are worth seeking out to expand your combat repertoire.



GANGSTER FLIPPING

@schillingc



YAKUZA 5

What doesn't Kiryu makes you stronger



INFO
FORMAT PS3
(DOWNLOAD ONLY)
ETA TBC
PUB SEGA

Three years have passed since its Japanese release, so if Yakuza 5 occasionally looks its age, that's only fitting. This is, after all, a game about getting older. If there's one common thread binding its five playable protagonists, it's that they're all trying to build themselves a new future, while struggling to escape their past.

Not that Yakuza 5 is often concerned with consistency, mind. It's a pick-and-mix of disparate ideas and themes, as varied as it is generous. One minute you'll sit through a languidly paced cutscene wherein two rival gangsters discuss mutual respect, the next you'll be pursuing a street racer in a taxi. In the game's second chapter, a jailbreak is immediately followed by a snowmobile chase that culminates in a fist-to-paw fight with an angry bear. *Really.*

It's easy to forgive the localisation team for taking such a long time, in light of the sheer amount of stuff to see and do here. There are fully playable Virtua Fighter 2 and Taiko: Drum Master arcade machines. You can fish, bet on chicken races and take part in snowball fights. You can hunt foxes and deer, serve ramen

at a busy restaurant, and play baseball with a giant fried shrimp for a bat. In one chapter, street battles are replaced by dance-offs, as wannabe idol Haruka is challenged by rival girls to rhythm-action mini-games.

Yakuza's always had more than its fair share of side activities, but here they're so plentiful – and in many cases, so well realised – that they're more than mere distractions.

SECOND LIFE

That said, there are still plenty of opportunities to enjoy more conventional pursuits, such as smashing in lippy thugs' faces with giant traffic cones. What the combat still lacks in fluidity (you'll occasionally find yourself launching combos into thin air) it delivers with weighty feedback and the visual gratification of special moves.

The four fighters have distinctive styles: the likeable Akiyama leads with his legs, while washed-up baseball star Shinada has a double-fisted swing that may be designed

to crack home runs, but is happy to deal with skulls. The regular environmental finishers are particularly vicious this time, notably man-mountain Saejima's ability to bounce goons so hard he can line up a spine-splintering clothesline.

However, it's still Kazuma Kiryu's show. He begins with an alias, working as a taxi driver as he attempts to build a new life. But it's not long before he's shattering someone's coccyx by slamming them arse-first into a bollard.

If old habits die hard, Yakuza 5 finds the pathos in that idea, a slow-burn opening showing us just what he's sacrificing by reverting to type. That blend of brutality and sentimentality won't be for everyone, but this dense, absorbing game proves it's a taste worth acquiring.

VERDICT

So huge and varied it's more underworld life sim than action-RPG, Yakuza 5 is the acme of this underrated series. An unforgettable, seedy journey. **Chris Schilling**

"A JAILBREAK IS FOLLOWED BY A FIST-TO-PAW FIGHT WITH AN ANGRY BEAR. *REALLY.*"



MELODY AM

@schillingc



PERSONA 4: DANCING ALL NIGHT

If the devil has the best tunes, what about demons?



INFO
FORMAT PS VITA
ETA OUT NOW
PUB NIS AMERICA
DEV ATLUS

The fact that a rhythm game based on a seven-year-old PS2 JRPG doesn't actually seem *that* ridiculous says something for the enduring appeal of Persona 4. Well, it is still *fairly* ridiculous. But it proves a surprisingly strong fit, at least in aesthetic terms. If the narrative is a little forced, there's something innately appealing about dancing your cares away, particularly in such a relentlessly optimistic game.

At times it succeeds almost despite itself. Initially, its rhythm mechanics seem solid. Notes travel outwards on either side of the screen, towards the six outermost inputs on your PS Vita (↑, ← and ↓ on the D-pad; and the △, ○ and × buttons), which you must press as they pass. You'll sometimes need to hold buttons for sustained notes or press two buttons simultaneously, while the analogue sticks can be flicked to make scratches – denoted by rings that expand outwards. Hitting these, though, is optional: your combo won't reset if you miss them, you just won't get a top score.

And yet, Atlus seems determined to distract you from the task at hand. As the music plays, characters launch into energetic routines on gaudy stages, shouting loudly to one another throughout the performance. The noises that accompany your inputs are equally off-putting,

with scratches occasionally producing the kind of sound that most games would use to signify the end of a combo.

You can turn most of this off, but the display still feels unnecessarily busy. The scoring system, meanwhile, has too heavy a focus on combo length; one anomalous 'good' note in the middle of a string of perfect hits will score lower than a series of misses in the final third.

IDOL WORSHIP

The novel visual element is similarly flawed. It concerns the disappearance of a Japanese idol group, with Persona 4's investigation team helping friend and fellow idol Rise solve the mystery. You'd expect a degree of high camp and a streak of self-awareness, but it plays things with a relatively straight face.

The result is overwritten and over-earnest, but just about gets by through sheer force of

personality – especially if you care at all about Yu, Chie, Kanji and company.

What saves Dancing All Night is the quality of both its soundtrack and its choreography. The remixes of Persona 4 standards are often outstanding: an Akira Yamaoka cameo is an unexpected treat, as is the vocalised version of the Junes theme, as naggingly catchy as ever. And the dance routines, watched back on replay, are a delight: seeing familiar characters express themselves through dance is strangely uplifting. It's the kind of game you'll return to, not to chase high scores, but for the good vibes that come with playing along to great music.

VERDICT

A few awkward steps threaten to spoil its performance, but strong characters and exceptional production values earn Dancing All Night a rousing reception. **Chris Schilling**



With its roster and customisation options, 2K16's potential should be limitless. *Should.*

CHIN MUSIC

@BenjiWilson

WWE 2K16

It's all about the game... and therein lies the problem



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ALSO ON PS3
ETA OUT NOW
PUB 2K GAMES
DEV YUKE'S/VISUAL
CONCEPTS

Following last year's raw-yet-promising debut for the WWE series on current-gen, 2K16 sees it advance to cusp-of-main-event status – indeed, its upward trajectory mirrors in-ring performer Roman Reigns. Much like the truck-sized Samoan, this latest Yuke's/Visual Concepts collaboration has the looks, and tools, to succeed, yet still feels a year away from true greatness.

Inside the squared circle, it's *wonderful*. The wrestling genre has often struggled to meet the demand for a game that plays like Street Fighter but looks like Monday Night Raw. Here that gulf is bridged with grace and expertise. Fights are deliciously physical, yet also require brains thanks to the excellent stamina system and limited (but regenerating) reversals. Yet touches like chain wrestling, rest holds and a stick-rotating submission system wrestled from UFC Undisputed 3 lend a sense of the 'real' WWE.

Aiding these complex systems is a colossal and beautifully varied roster, with up to 20 individual traits per wrestler. Brock Lesnar effortlessly suplexing an opponent feels markedly different from Heath Slater struggling to do

so. Technical bouts between Cesaro and Finn Bálor play out uniquely from Kalisto vs Neville air shows. For the first time in the series once known as Smackdown, it pays to master favourite characters rather than apply identical muscle-memory tactics to every grapppler.

PEDIGREE CHUMP

Which all makes the sucker punch more sickening: there's just not enough to do with those stars once they're mastered. The Stone Cold showcase is a fun way to relive classic matches, but (aside from cameos as Kane and Triple H) only ever places you in Steve Austin's lace-ups. MyCareer is a gutsy attempt to recreate the rise to Hall Of Fame grandeur, with amusing distractions such as backstage interviews, but it's again focused on a single character.

For all its great in-ring work, the developer has its priorities out the ring backwards. WWE Universe – in which you micro-manage every show

and wrestler – should be the priority. It's the only game mode that will offer variety over a 12-month period. Instead, barring a few tweaks such as the ability to assign shows to a particular town, it's almost exactly the same as last year. This is pure ring-rust.

There are 120 on-disc wrestlers, room for another 100 created ones and more arenas than you could ever use... and yet the Universe AI books two feuding combatants one-on-one, week after week, and has fewer cutscenes to stitch these matches together than were in last-gen's WWE 2K14.

It's a staggering, depressing oversight. The strides made in-ring still make this an essential play, but that missed opportunity stings harder than a Big Show turnbuckle chop.

VERDICT

It's no exaggeration to call this phenomenal between the ropes – and therefore a huge shame that long-term play hinges on you sticking with exhibition matches for variety. **Ben Wilson**

"IT PAYS TO MASTER FAVOURITE WRESTLERS, NOT RELY UPON MUSCLE MEMORY."

The reason for the storm is finally explained, but it doesn't answer many of the questions raised.



HELLA NOVELLA

@itsjensim



Episode

Series

6

9

PlayStation

PlayStation

LIFE IS STRANGE STE5 – POLARIZED

The long-awaited finale is more tornadon't than tornado



INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB SQUARE ENIX
DEV DONTNOD

No, you haven't messed with the timeline too many times – there really are two scores up there, floating like the twin moons in Arcadia Bay's sky. Please excuse me while I have my Belgian waffles/bacon pancakes. And eat them, too.

In OPM #114, we predicted Life Is Strange's conclusion might not step out from Episode 4's shadow. Episode 5 proves Mystic OPM right. Not only does the finale cover in the last chapter's shade, but you'll spend an inordinate amount of time in the shadows, too, dodging flashlights in an irritating simulacrum of early Metal Gear. "But it's *supposed* to be a nightmare," some will cry. "But it's rubbish," I'll retort.

We begin in the heart of the narrative storm. The villain's motives are indistinct, though opportunity is crystal clear, as the key mechanic introduced in the previous episode helps shine new light on old ground. Episode 5 gleefully rubbing something in our flabbergasted faces is the highlight in a scene that ultimately falls flat.

Episode 2 rightly wrenched control away from us when we needed it most, but Episode 5 puts too *much* control in our time-bending hands, leeching all sense of panic. It's hard to feel truly present in a tense setup when you're zipping through alternate timelines in which canapés are served and polite conversation is made.

The halfway point is where things get ludicrous; here the episode misses the memo about Life Is Strange being a narrative adventure and guns for the stealth genre instead.

CLICHÉ BAY

Muddling and grumbling my way through metaphorical mazes, the game's self-referential wisecracks translate as distasteful. It's desperate to bludgeon me with moments from the past. "REMEMBER THIS BIT?! AREN'T YOU SAD?!" it screams. Yes, Episode 5, I do. You don't need to *literally* walk me down memory lane to remind me.

Polarized displays glimmers of the previous four episodes' originality and poignancy. Subtler scenes resonate. I grimace at an ingeniously evil set of dialogue options, and feel genuinely starved of air when forced to watch a previous scene again, this time with surreal cyber-commentary.

The ending we've been leading up to is another clobber on the noggin we saw coming a mile off: standard time-traveller fare, but it's testament to Life Is Strange's writing that I spend a good 15 minutes deliberating the choice – and a further ten openly weeping at the (hackneyed) ending I get. At least it is the *right* one...

While the episode does provide a conclusion to Max's bittersweet story, it's splintered things apart more than tied them all together. Yet even with an imperfect end, Life Is Strange, as a whole, towers over almost any other PS4 game you choose to name this year. Better grab some Kleenex: I feel a nosebleed coming on.

VERDICT

A fractured Episode 5 doesn't leave me enraptured, but it can't take the shine off a nearly-perfect interactive narrative experience. The new pinnacle of the genre. **Jen Simpkins**

One of the best parts of getting on the road? A welcome break from the 'bantz'.



080

GHOST RIDER

@dirigiblebill

NEED FOR SPEED

EA's roadster gets a tune-up, but drifts off-course



Ghosts' second Need For Speed has been labelled a fresh start, but it sometimes feels like a vision of the afterlife. It's always night, the skybox flickering between dusk and dawn, and the environment doesn't add up on some worrying level – some roadside objects can be smashed, others are eerily shatter-proof. Poor civilian drivers resemble lost souls, faces chalk-white behind the windshield glass.

And then there are the demons – your buddies Manu, Spike, Amy, Robyn and Travis – each a ghastly, chirping thesaurus of car culture slang, prancing through cutscenes dripping with product placement. They'll pester you mercilessly by phone, and while you can always hang up, you can't ignore them completely – these characters are the gatekeepers to certain missions, rewards and, further in, meet-ups with real-life street racing celebs. *Need For Speed*? Needy, more like.

TRAFFIC JAMMED

If the storytelling is abrasive, the ambience suits a game that's caught in a mild existential funk – too messy for serious gearheads, with bovine civilian traffic tripping you up in a way that can feel cheap, but not entirely a game for free-wheeling arcade drivers. The landscape glistens with detail, but Ventura Bay is undersized, and



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB EA
DEV GHOST GAMES

the side activities are run-of-the-mill: collectable "Vistas" of grubby districts, places where you can pull doughnuts, plus a smattering of hidden car parts. It can't hold a candle to the city of Need For Speed's distant ancestor, *Burnout Paradise*, and lacks the sweeping charisma of 2013's *Need For Speed Rivals*.

It's also a bit too forgiving. I'm not sure there is such a thing as 'failure' in this game. Almost every action, whether performed during an event or while roving the blacktop, earns Rep, plus cash in one of five categories, with the hand-outs so generous that there's little incentive to improve.

Place last with a disastrous time after wiping out twice, and you'll still roll away with

a fat stack. Vehicle damage is cosmetic and fixed for free when you warp to the garage. Stop dead during a drift, meanwhile, and you might rake in *more* Rep than if you'd aced the turn – drift scoring is easy to cheat, being based too crudely on the car's angle and how fast you're travelling.

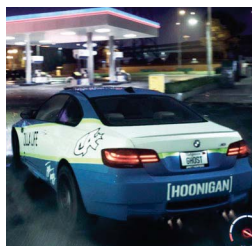
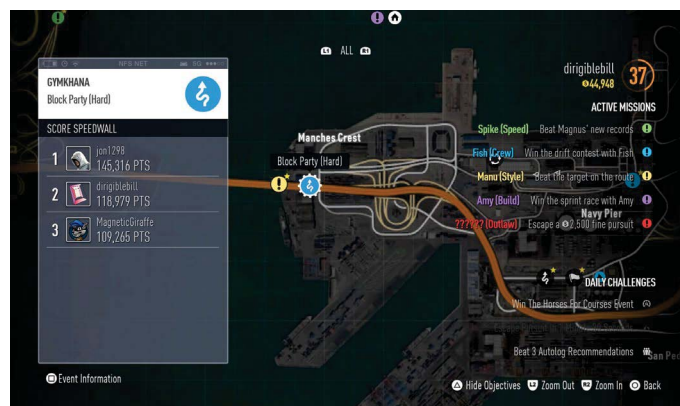
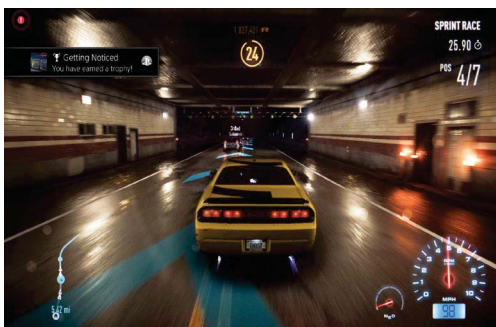
You'll earn more Rep if you're a smarter driver, combining score actions for multipliers, while revisiting events in multiplayer or to beat a friend's leaderboard position naturally adds challenge. But the basic progression curve's shallowness is disempowering.

It's not until later on, past the ten-hour mark, that terrifying top speeds force you to hone your craft in order to

"IT'S A BIT TOO FORGIVING. I'M NOT SURE THERE IS SUCH A THING AS 'FAILURE'."

Right Slipstreaming can be a handy way to overcome a power deficit.

Below Each event has a scoreboard. Beat a friend for bonus Rep.



Above The grainy filter may annoy some, but the visuals are generally slick.

survive freeway races against oncoming traffic. It's a shame the difficulty isn't quite right, because the car handling strikes a good balance — hefty yet precise enough to support some memorable Gymkhana runs — and customisation has seen massive, worthwhile expansion since the previous iteration, while remaining accessibly structured.

SPRING BREAK

All the cars, which range from chubby Honda Civics to over-muscled Porsches, are yours to buy and upgrade from the outset, and the tuning options are robust. Tweaking sway bars, balancing front and rear tyre pressure and fiddling with your steer range gives you true ownership over your rides. Or, if you'd rather not fuss over the variables, just adjust a single slider to skew the handling towards grip or drifting.

It's a good compromise between degrees of expertise,

and the missions do a nice job of spotlighting different builds — stick with Manu and Robyn and, assuming you survive the agonising bantz, you'll be thrown into drift competitions that suit high-acceleration, low-grip cars. As a contrast, Spike's setlist is all about horsepower.

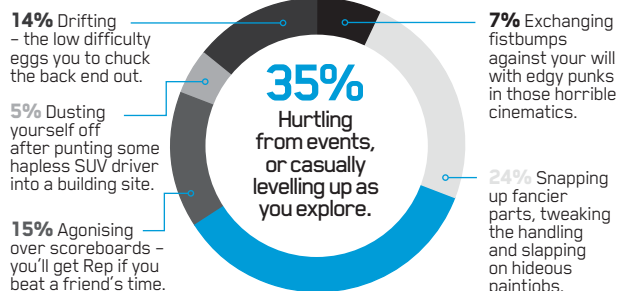
But calling the new Need For Speed a "reboot" seems bizarre. Rivals, after all, was a decent game. It knew exactly what kind of racer it wanted to be. The latest instalment, by contrast, is a work of uncertainty — an uncertainty the fast-talking cutscenes struggle to hide. There's the ghost of a great racer here, but it's trapped in limbo.

VERDICT

Need For Speed returns from the garage yet again with some great modifications, but lacklustre world design, shallow progression and awful cutscenes deprive it of traction.
Edwin Evans-Thirlwell

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

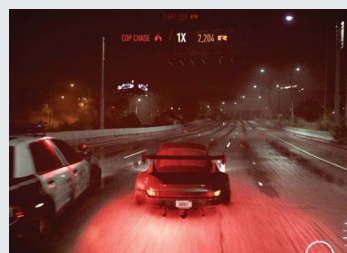
WHAT YOU DO IN... NEED FOR SPEED



STAT PACK

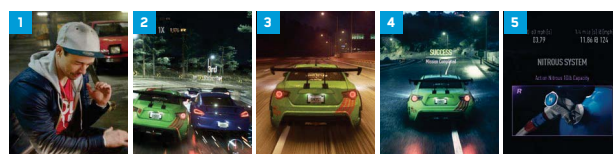


HOW TO... MILK THE FUZZ



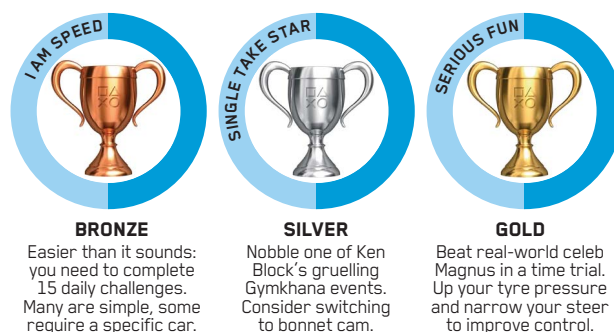
Ventura Bay's police are a rare breed, and easy to outwit. Frustrating, as you need them for Outlaw missions. Look for cops in shopping districts, then stay just ahead while lapping the block. Bodyslam civilians to raise the payout when you escape.

THE FIRST FIVE HOURS...



1 Get dragged to an underground racing club by a swaggering child in baseball cap. **2** Oh no, there are more of them. Lots more. Complete a few beginner races in a boisterous Subaru amid piercing cries of "sick" and "cray." **3** Finally escape to the freeway. Celebrate by T-boning a Hot Wheels van. **4** Squeak through a time trial for a few thousand dollars. **5** Treat your car to a new engine block and a nitrous injector.

TROPHY CABINET





DIVINELY INSPIRED

@robinvalentine



DIVINITY: ORIGINAL SIN ENHANCED EDITION

Submit your enemies to a baptism by fire



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB FOCUS HOME
INTERACTIVE
DEV LARIAN STUDIOS

When my gang of adventurers finish a fight, they leave the battlefield a mess. Half of it charred, the other sodden with rainwater; clouds of noxious gas and choking smog hovering overhead; pools of flammable oil; piles of splinters; rivers of inexplicably electrified blood. I'm sure the villagers will be happy their orc problem has been dealt with, but I don't think anything's growing on this land again.

Divinity: Original Sin is an unapologetically old-school RPG — a top-down tale of wizards, four-person parties and tactical turn-based combat — but what makes it special are its modern twists. Foremost among them is the incredible interactivity of its setting. Almost every object you encounter can be picked up, moved, destroyed or even combined with other objects. Discover an explosive trap? Throw a crate onto it to set it off. Need a new weapon? Use a branch with some sinew for a bow.

It's where that design bleeds into the combat that things get brilliantly chaotic. Victory is about manipulating the natural logic of the world. Oil and toxic ooze catch on fire — get your enemies standing in the stuff and you can burn them to a crisp. Water puts out fire, and raises a concealing cloud of steam. But water and steam (and their close cousin, blood) conduct electricity.

If you're wet when a spell of cold is cast on you, you're liable to freeze solid. And that's just the start. Combined with a versatile magic system, this web of elemental interactions breathes incredible life into the otherwise traditional fights.

MAGES OF SIN

Innovative too is its approach to co-op, playable locally and online. As you adventure alongside a friend, your characters will regularly interact, having in-game conversations in which each of you picks your dialogue choices. You're even able to challenge each other's decisions — if you disagree with how your buddy wants to complete a mission, for example, you can pit your social stats against theirs in an attempt to charm, intimidate or convince them to do things your way.

Where the game suffers is in its fiddliness. The controls and menus have been adapted

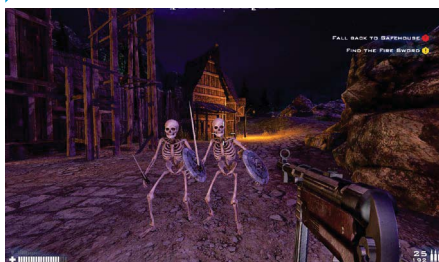
well from the game's original PC version, but niggling issues are carried over. Each party member, for example, has a separate inventory, necessitating regular dull shuffling of items and gold between them. The writing, too, is tedious — while it occasionally manages off-kilter charm and humour, it's more often groan-inducing and over-stuffed with clichés.

But, unusually for an RPG, this is a game led more by its systems than its storytelling. Its intricate yet accessible mechanics make it a unique modern classic — Divinity: Original Sin understands that, sometimes, having fun means making a bit of a mess.

VERDICT

One of the most exciting PC RPGs of recent years effortlessly makes the transition to PlayStation without losing a drop of its tactical depth in the process. **Robin Valentine**

INFO FORMAT PS4 (DOWNLOAD ONLY) ETA OUT NOW
PUB KISS LTD DEV REDBEDLAM



BEDLAM

A blast through the past

Movie tie-ins are a videogame mainstay, but in recent years there's been a wave of games adapted from books. Metro, The Witcher and now Bedlam, based on Christopher Brookmyre's 2013 novel about a man who finds himself sucked into a '90s FPS, Tron-style.

The game tackles the story from a different perspective. You play Athena – a programmer transported to StarFire, a Quake-like shooter from her youth. Trapped in a virtual world, Athena travels through glitches to other shooters,¹ such as COD-like Death Or Glory, an Elder Scrolls-esque fantasy RPG and several others we won't spoil, because discovering the glitches is a big part of the tale's appeal.

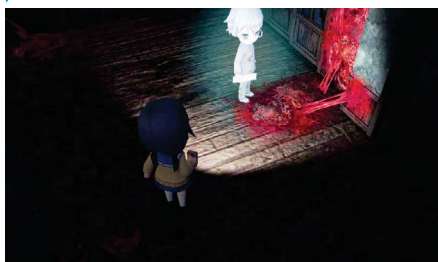
Brookmyre penned the game's script, and the writing is the best thing about it. The main character knows she's in a game and constantly makes (actually funny) jokes about Voodoo graphics cards or Raving Rabbids. Dialogue and voice acting are superb. I challenge any game this year to top, "I don't give a fetid slug's foreskin where you're from."

The problem is it's not fun. Movement is fast-paced, but the mechanics are decrepit. Gunplay feels flimsy, the enemies offer no challenge and the weapons are forgettable. Doom and Nukem hold up because of their superb design, while Bedlam's environments are tests of patience. And, unsurprisingly for a game intended to ape 20-year-old shooters, it looks bum.² It only lasts six hours, but still outstays its welcome, with duff platforming sections padding out the runtime. There's a great game to be made from Bedlam's concept. Sadly, this isn't it. **Jordan Farley**



FOOTNOTES 1 The most inventive levels turn games you wouldn't expect into first-person shooters. **2** That's kind of the point, but the art design isn't strong enough to shine through.

INFO FORMAT PS VITA ETA OUT NOW
PUB 5PB, MARVELOUS USA DEV 5PB, TEAM GRISGRIS



CORPSE PARTY: BLOOD DRIVE

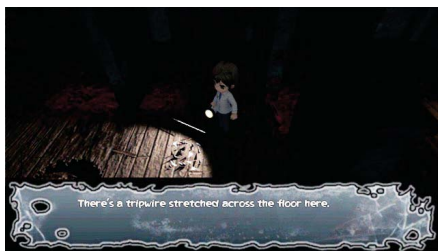
Do not resuscitate

Look, it's my party and I'll cry if I want to. You'd cry too, if you'd played the first Corpse Party. It was 16-bit, role-playing J-horror at its ghoulish best, with supernatural executions so unsettling that even the most cynical were reaching for their rosaries. Second instalment Book Of Shadows used first-person view to little effect, so Blood Drive's 3D chibi art-style was set to resurrect the cadaver shindig spirit. The extra graphical dimension, however, seems to leech from the gameplay. It's as flat as a schoolgirl pancake.

There's still a distinct whiff of the old Corpse. Heavenly Host Elementary is back, wallpapered in a fetching shade of pulsating haemorrhoid. Plot twists and needle-sharp humour return.¹ The series' binaural audio is even more spine-tingling on PS Vita – it takes a few glances to confirm the old lady next to me isn't chanting Japanese curses.

What a crying shame the majority of this carcass hoedown is a bloody nightmare (and not in the gory, spooky sense). The framerate stutters worse than Porky Pig being eyed up by a butcher. Moving between rooms or using items triggers lengthy load screens every five seconds. When new mechanics aren't cheap and stale, they're irritating; hiding from ghosties would work if it weren't for the furniture needlessly piping up and getting me killed.² Dialogue scenes interrupt crucial moments, and I'm taken back to the start screen after each chapter for more loading screen woes.

Its worst sin? It's boring. The series' signature shocks are in short supply, ensuring the game crumbles into ashes and dust. RIP. **Jen Simpkins**



FOOTNOTES 1 The story provides a decent end to the series, but new characters and questionable bath scenes disappoint. **2** "Would you like to hide from the hellspawn of Satan? Y/N?" YES, OBVIOUSLY.

INFO FORMAT PS VITA ALSO ON PS3 ETA OUT NOW
PUB FULL CONTROL DEV FULL CONTROL



SPACE HULK

Hulk smashed

Based on the excellent – and depressingly rare – Space Hulk boardgame by Games Workshop,¹ this isn't your typical 'space marine' game. Rather, it's an isometric tactical strategy title pitting Terminators (armoured warriors) against Genestealers (purple xenomorphs). It's an exceedingly slow-paced timesink that should thrive on handheld, then, but someone's clearly taken a chainsword to the code because something's gone very wrong.

PS Vita struggles to run it, for starters. Despite looking as ugly as a melted Chaos Dwarf Bull Centaur, and being powered by simple turn-based systems that most pocket calculators could tackle without sweating, I get the distinct feeling that PS Vita is being subjected to a painful Noise Marine solo. Each mission takes ages to load, and once in, things are just as slow: the game needs to think long and hard about *everything* before moves are put into practice. Even then there are stutters galore. What's going on?

The rules of Space Hulk are tight, cruel and gripping, but for those unfamiliar with the physical game, they're barely explained. This is a brutal test where one wrong step will end a mission – and it doesn't attempt to bring newcomers along for the ride. A confusing, cluttered UI exacerbates matters, and even has you tapping in places that could cause unexpected tutorial pop-ups to disappear before you've digested the info.

Punishing strategy games have a place on PlayStation – just look at the incredible Xcom: Enemy Unknown/Enemy Within double act on PS3.² I can't help but see this as a massive missed opportunity: a smart, tough base game completely obscured by janky execution. **Matthew Pellett**



FOOTNOTES 1 The fourth edition was released last September. It was an instant sell out and now fetches modest prices on eBay. **2** I still can't get my head around Xcom 2's PC exclusivity. Madness.

Wheelies look cool, but they slow you down, making them feel unsatisfying.



084

RIDECLUB, SURELY?

@CatGoneCrazy



DRIVECLUB BIKES

Nobody saw this must-have in their mirrors...

Well, here's a surprise. PS4's best car game, suddenly available with bikes instead. Whether as DLC for existing Driveclub owners, or in its comparatively diminutive standalone state, this is very literally 'Driveclub but with bikes in'. It's the same tracks, same structure, same breathtaking graphics and same online competition. But it's most noteworthy because it fixes modern bike games' biggest problem – frustration.

In this post-arcade era where realism is king, a bike's relationship with the road is too fragile to be fun, at least for most people. Clearly, in a game as fast and frantic as Driveclub, there's no way the player could be expected to tiptoe around each bend like in MotoGP 15, gently applying the brakes and trying not to breathe too heavily on the throttle for fear of high-siding. Driveclub Bikes takes all that worry away.

It's still possible to crash, but you either have to smash into a wall at significant speed and at an obtuse angle, or do a wheelie or stoppie (back wheelie) so outrageous you end up with the bike riding you. In either situation, you're simply reset to the track in a flash, almost immediately back up to speed, having fun.

The unfortunate trade-off is that there are no "look Mum, I'm wrapped around a tree," ragdoll



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB SONY
DEV EVOLUTION STUDIOS

physics for you or the other riders, which cuts out a lot of potential spectacle. But presumably running down fallen riders, Road Rash-style, wouldn't sit very well with PEGI and that 3+ rating. Still, it's a shame that even the cars' modest spills are more spectacular.

RAIN THRESHOLD

The bikes feel just as fast as the cars, which is especially true if you opt for the terrifying helmet cam. Onlookers in the room will probably start making worried noises as they watch you hurtle through narrow lanes in the middle of a thunderstorm (in the dark). The finicky, twitchy behaviour of the bike's front

end couples with the often-indistinct corners to make first-person views too difficult to use seriously, but it's still at least worth watching the replays in them to see the incredible job that Evolution has done with the visuals.

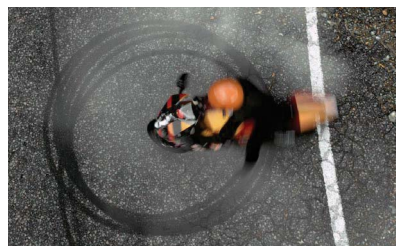
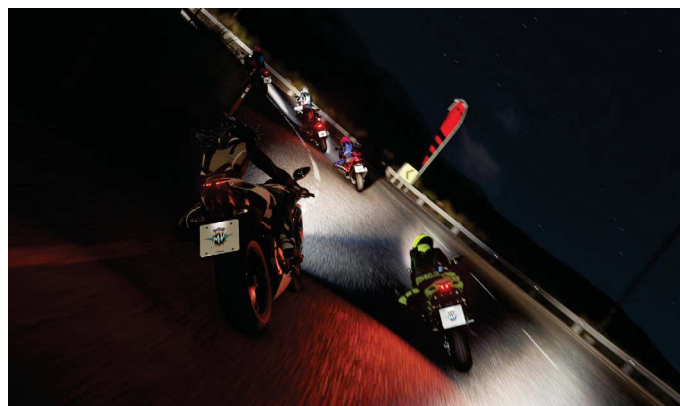
Rain streams over the windshield in beautiful clarity, only occasionally obscured by the blurrier drops streaming outwards on your virtual visor. Best of all, it's dynamic. Sure, there are forks of lightning now, but it might brighten up at any minute.

There's evidently a realistic physics simulation at work as the bike's rear wheel squirms around under acceleration, excitingly 'stepping out over the line', Bruce Springsteen-

"THERE'S JUST ENOUGH OF A WILD SIDE TO KEEP THE BIKES CHALLENGING BUT STILL FUN."

Right Chasing fast, clean laps is a great challenge. Don't touch the sides.

Below It's absolutely beautiful. Best-looking racer ever? Maybe...



Above Yes, you can do doughnuts. Always a sign of a good motorbike game.

style, only to be wrangled back before you come completely unstuck. There's just enough of a wild side to keep the bikes challenging and rewarding to ride, but plenty of scope for correcting a poor cornering angle – certainly more than with the cars – making it instantly accessible and fun.

TWO'S COMPANY

The bikes are kept separate from the cars, so you won't mix the two, Motorstorm style. Indeed, there's a 50/50 split on the DLC version's menu where you choose cars or bikes. As with the core game, there's a wealth of short solo events to plough through in which you must meet somewhat arbitrary criteria to win stars and unlock the next tier. If you're already familiar with Driveclub, netting all 162 stars can take just two evenings' play. But that really isn't the point.

Driveclub is all about online competition and that hasn't

changed here. Sure, there's traditional online PvP racing, but the game is at its best when you're challenging your friends and rival clubs to beat a time or score you've set. Racing against a human rival's ghost is incredibly addictive and, if anything, the increased precision and discipline required from racing on only two wheels makes for even more incremental gains and losses. Get stuck into this competitively and you'll be hooked for weeks.

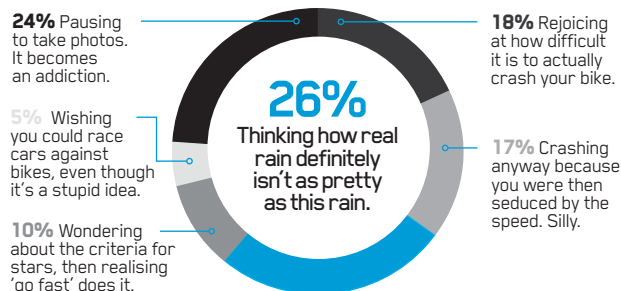
Evolution has done a superb job of fitting bikes into the Driveclub template. This isn't just great DLC – it's the best bike racer in years.

VERDICT

Despite being smaller than regular Driveclub and lacking variety, this is serious fun, surprisingly accessible and features a more sophisticated handling model than the main game. Great stuff. **Justin Towell**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... DRIVECLUB BIKES



MULTIPLAYER



There's a competitive, full online mode and, thanks to the bikes being thinner than cars, all of the races are much less crowded, so you can actually race people, reeling them in over laps. Laggy players can still compete, but are turned into ghosts.

STAT PACK

6	78	12	50
Countries to race in, like the main game, with each area offering several circuits and variants.	Tracks. Yes, they're the same as Driveclub, but they feel very different on a bike.	The number of superbikes included. Also the maximum number of bikes on track.	The number of replays you can save, though sadly that total is shared with the cars as well.

LOVING/HATING



BEING NIGHT RIDER

There's nothing like zooming along on your steel stallion in the dead of night, single headlight illuminating the road and trees ahead.



THE SLIPSTREAM EFFECT

The slipstream effect is way too strong, particularly in multiplayer, meaning you basically have no defence on the final straight.

TROPHY CABINET





Meet Sorey. He enjoys reading, shepherding and living by the code of the cliché.



SHEPHERD'S DELIGHT

@jennybaker23



TALES OF ZESTIRIA

Brave new world, same old story



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB BANDAI NAMCO
DEV BANDAI NAMCO

A cookie-cutter cast of anime characters, an elaborate battle system and some exceptionally colourful landscapes – the latest entry in Bandai Namco's Tales series ticks all the familiar boxes. Set in a magical 'good versus evil' medieval world of dungeons and dragons, Zestiria offers a vanilla JRPG experience that rarely ventures beyond the realm of sweet simplicity.

It's a tale as old as Tales itself. Sorey, a boy raised by angels known as Seraphs, leaves his idyllic home to become the Shepherd, a legendary hero tasked with defeating the Lord of Calamity. The majority of the game's spent gaining power for the final battle by clearing a variety of dungeons and fighting Hellion demons. Travelling on foot throughout sometimes feels like a chore, but the wealth of flora and fauna in Zestiria's pretty open-world pastures helps soften the blow. There are healing herbs to collect, wild beasts to fight, and one interesting twist in the form of Normin: hidden pets with stat-boosting talents.

Zestiria is first and foremost about fun, so don't be surprised if more often than not the main scenario's outshone by a particularly

Instagram-worthy inn meal or the triggering of a signature Tales skit, such as a light-hearted chat about fashion. At its best, this is a playful monster-hunting adventure in which there's always another treasure chest around the corner. My advice: sit back and soak up the continent of Glenwood's sunny aesthetic to your heart's content – there are few games in which a beach parasol is a powerful weapon.

ANIME ARCHETYPES

It's important to value the little things in Zestiria, because sadly, the big things lack originality. The plot embraces a tried and tested formula with little emotional warmth, while the characters resemble a batch of assorted anime archetype muffins popped straight out of a mould – the childhood friend, the wise old man, the politically active princess... The end result is a JRPG that's likeable but forgettable.

It's impossible, of course, to mention a Tales title without addressing its distinctive battle

system. For newcomers it's overwhelming at first, when info-dumps about combo effects and status ailments bombard you, but progress is steady and satisfying.

Still, if the idea of making minute tactical adjustments until your party runs like a finely tuned engine doesn't appeal you can always fall back to a hack 'n' slash approach. There's also a feature known as Armatization, which allows Sorey to combine with one of his Seraph companions for a flashy anime-style upgrade.

Ultimately, like many recent Tales games, Zestiria's all about the journey because the destination you're heading for isn't exactly new. Its whimsical world knocks the fun factor out of the park, but its storytelling skimps on imagination.

VERDICT

Beyond its puddle-deep characters, Zestiria is a decent addition to the series, boasting a colourful open world, charming aesthetic and a robust battle system. **Jenny Baker**

"THERE ARE FEW GAMES IN WHICH A BEACH PARASOL IS A POWERFUL WEAPON."



Despite all the nuclear destruction, there's still greenery dotted about.

WASTE MOUNTAIN

@bentyrer



087

WASTELAND 2: DIRECTOR'S CUT

Fallout's forefather stumbles onto PS4



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB KOCH MEDIA
DEV INXILE
ENTERTAINMENT

You barely get a chance to polish your apocalypse sheriff's badge before your radio crackles into life, telling you a colony out west needs desperate assistance. Seconds later, an outpost down south requests your presence. You're yet to notice the nuclear detritus but *Wasteland 2* has you condemning a town to death, without you even realising that's what's happening.

That's because the freedom that *Wasteland* grants you also comes with just enough rope to hang yourself. Any decision – but usually the one you don't know you're making – is just two different shades of messed up. Which power-craving fascist do you choose between? The one in control or the one chasing control? Consider a levelling-up system for every single person in your group – with each weapon, skill and gear upgrade a delicate balancing act – and you'll find it a little too easy to lose days debating what to do in this post-apocalyptic world.

All sound a little *Fallout*-y? That's for good reason. The original *Wasteland* helped shape how the first two *Fallout* titles played, all three sharing a turn-based combat system. But while *Fallout* went to the gun range to give itself an FPS makeover, *Wasteland 2* sticks to turn-based combat with mixed results. Skirmishes require lots of brain over brawn, with mistakes punished

on any difficulty level. It's thrilling, however, to watch a plan unfold perfectly and have your merry gang slice through bands of wrong 'uns.

Alas, seeing what's going on can be an exercise in damage limitation, with the camera constantly needing fussing over – you never feel like you're getting a satisfactory angle.

CONTROL FREAK

And the camera isn't the only issue. At any given time, there are just too many button presses to perform the simplest of tasks. Say you want to heal a party member. First you have to get up the options wheel with **LB**, select which party member needs some TLC with **RT**, find the appropriate medical kit and finally confirm you'd like to patch up, *Casualty* style.

It's far too fiddly, and I botch several routine actions by accidentally hitting the wrong button, breaking the flow of the exploration. If you're coming to

the series fresh, this is further compounded by an ill-thought tutorial that quickly pops up and disappears, leaving you to muddle through until you've figured out its obtuse systems. It just doesn't feel at home away from its PC origins.

Wasteland 2 is so old-school it thinks GCSEs are still called O-levels. At one point, it even has a Three Amigos joke rubbing shoulders with a campfire of farting cowboys. Both incredibly timely references. Yet this anachronism is more of a celebratory lap; a fascinating history lesson with an effectively grim universe that keeps you wanting to struggle on and peel back its layers.

VERDICT

An enjoyably grotty world hampered by unintuitive controls. This might not be the post-apocalypse you're looking for, but you'll be glad you fell into it. **Ben Tyrer**

EDITOR'S
AWARDPlayStation
Official Magazine - UK

BOMB VOYAGE

@dirigiblebill

FALLOUT 4

Building a better tomorrow with
Bethesda's latest wasteland epic

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB BETHESDA
SOFTWARES
DEV BETHESDA GAME
STUDIOS

Brace yourselves for what's about to follow: Fallout 4 is an absolute mess. Before reaching for your Fat Man, however, take note: this is as much praise as it is censure. If there's one thing that sets Bethesda's role-playing games apart, other than their ridiculous scale, it's the junk. Every crevice is packed with knick-knacks, all subject to real-time physics and most surplus to requirements, and it's this confusing sprawl that makes the landscape feel lived in. There's nothing quite so human, after all, as the ability to generate clutter.

Fallout 4 upholds that tradition and then some. You can't go five minutes in its exquisitely trashed, 23rd century Boston without tripping over somebody's idea of treasure: old typewriters and bottles of Nuka Cola squirrelled away under rusting cars, skeletons clutching makeshift rifles in closets, railside ditches full of mutant vegetation. The larger interiors – which range from dusty car factories and military blimps to mouldy subway stations and cargo ships – are crammed with safes, chemical coolers, evidence rooms and pickable pockets. Even the toilets are worth investigating, though many are booby-trapped. Heck, you'll find things in sacks of rotting meat in Fallout 4 that would qualify as quest rewards in other RPGs.

IN-TRINKET

There's a familiar downside to this abundance, however, and it's that you'll spend most of your time nudging up against your carry limit, weighing the merits of different armour pieces and filling your AI companion's rucksack with valuable items that aren't suited to the task at



"EVERY HEAP OF BONES AND BRIC-A-BRAC HINTS AT SOME LONG-FORGOTTEN MISADVENTURE."





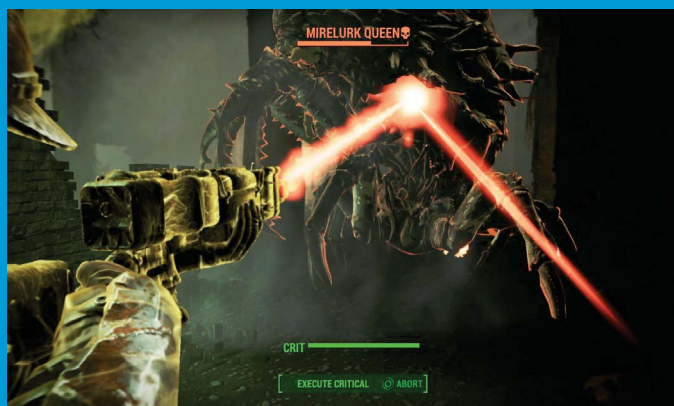
We're sure Fenway Park was somewhere round here... Fallout 4's open world is big. *Really* big.



Above There are loads of gear mods, but you'll need to level up your Intelligence stat.



Power armour is back, just waiting to be built, now with the added option of jetpack-style rocket boosters.

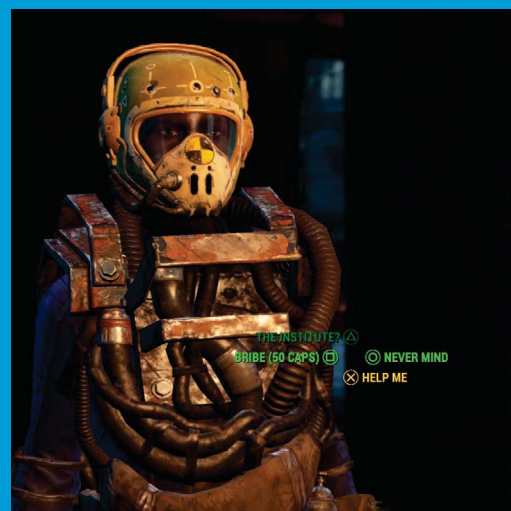


Above left Dogmeat never disapproves of your actions, however shady.

Above right Certain attacks are sometimes useless. Best use explosives, here.

Left Unlockable skills range from cannibalism to bouncing bullets back to sender.

Right Yellow-coloured dialogue will test your Charisma. Feeling irresistible?



hand. The attention to detail is undoubtedly engrossing – every heap of bones and bric-a-brac hints at some long-forgotten misadventure, whether it's tragic or amusing or somewhere in between – but the sheer quantity of stuff has an overwhelming, desensitising effect.

More importantly, it's a betrayal of the premise. This isn't so much a 'post-apocalyptic survival' experience as it is a gigantic, radioactive buffet of retro memorabilia. Indeed, many of the missions take you to historic sites and erstwhile tourist spots – you'll battle mutants for control of a crumbling neo-classical library, and turn a minigun on Raiders who've built their nest in the attic of an ancient courthouse.

Compulsive hoarders, of course, will be in their element. If you're after something a little more stringent, make sure you pick the highest difficulty setting – it not only toughens up foes, but it reduces the effects of radiation meds, raising the stakes when you consume uncooked food. You might also want to make a beeline for the Glowing Sea, a nightmarish region at the edge of the world map, where burrowing Radscorpions and Deathclaws are common sights and salvage is relatively scarce.

SPOILS OF WAR

If *Fallout 4* ever feels too much like a loot-'em-up, know that all the junk you amass does have a long-term value – providing, that is, you're the settler type. This instalment's defining feature is town-building, which becomes available soon after your character, a resident of one of the famous underground Vaults, leaves his or her refuge in search of a missing loved one. The landscape is dotted with workshops that unlock once you've completed a quest, such as wooing (or slaughtering) the locals.

Click on a workshop and you'll enter a building mode that allows you to dismantle objects for materials, then select and place structures, crops, generators, furniture and defences. Given a decent supply of food, water, bedding and the odd guardpost to stave off raiders, people will then come to live in these new colonies. The more luxurious you make the settlement, the happier the population will be, with jollier citizens being more productive when it comes to creating resources.

The brilliance of this system, assuming you don't completely ignore it, is how it flavours the otherwise very familiar business of exploration and scavenging. You aren't just combing bombed-out supermarkets and churches for a new breed of laser rifle or some story-related MacGuffin. You're also on the lookout for hotplates and alarm clocks, because these house the circuitry you need for water purifiers and turrets.

One of my favourite personal objectives involves digging up a complete set of balls and cues for my settlement's pool table. It doesn't quite counteract the deflation of having to

continually find space in my inventory for slightly better grades of gun, but it's a step in the right direction.

HALF-ALIVE

Town planners of a more esoteric bent will be delighted by the inclusion of various lightboxes, switches, pressure pads and sound emitters – by yoking these to a terminal, you can program elaborate cosmetic setups such as melodies that play when you enter houses. The depth can't rival a thoroughbred building sim such as *Minecraft*, and the asset library strikes a weird balance between alt-'50s kitsch

and stylised wastelander scrappiness, but there's a nice spread of opportunities for the budding theme-park

architect. It's just a shame that the townsfolk aren't plausible enough to really bring your colonies to life.

You can assign them to crops and stalls, equip them with cast-off weapons and send them to other towns to link up workshop inventories, but they mostly act like zombies, ambling about in a daze. Object placement is also quite unwieldy – the first-person view doesn't suit intricate building projects, and clipping parts together can be a real headache. Still, the satisfaction when you do chance upon a footsore wanderer knocking back a whiskey in your hand-built tavern is immense. All *Fallout* games deal with the collapse of society. But this is the first that lets you start afresh, and while there's room for improvement, the foundations are sound.

Too bloodthirsty to settle down and try your hand at interior decor? Not to worry, the gunplay has you covered. It's both intelligent and high-impact, though there are plenty of rough edges (and hilarious glitches). The AI wobbles between competent and dim – enemies have a solid grasp of flanking and will throw grenades to flush you out, but they'll often forget you were ever there should you escape detection for a moment or two.

The same applies to allies, who range from spunky reporters through zealous soldier-boys to your faithful but idiotic hound, Dogmeat. At one point, I talk my way out of a fight only for my associate to then linger stupidly as I leave the area, triggering a battle. Later, the same character causes more frustration by somehow getting stuck in a door, necessitating a through-gritted-teeth reload.

Mercifully, companions are indestructible and will self-revive once you've pacified the area, so hoiking a Molotov cocktail at a surrounded friendly is a perfectly viable strategy when the chips are truly down. It's a bit of a shambles, all told, but the variety of weapons – modifiable at workbenches with new scopes, stocks, barrels and assorted status effects – and the grisly delight of targeting limbs in V.A.T.S. mode, are more than compensation for the spotty AI.

Engaging V.A.T.S. now slows time rather than stopping it, so there's more pressure to think quickly. Another consequence of this small but substantial change is that you can delay a V.A.T.S. shot till a moving target is in full view, cackling obscenely as the odds of a hit climb above 50%. The trade-off is that successful accuracy rolls occasionally run awry because the target has inched back into cover. There are times, even, when the game frames an attack as the fatal blow, only for your victim to slip past the bullet, leaving the camera to pivot sheepishly around the spot where a cloud of gore and limbs should be. It's a definite scratch in the polish, but it's rare enough to escape with the label of charming gaffe rather than pure irritation.

VALUE ADDED

If all this sounds too fussy and abstract, fear not – you needn't rely on V.A.T.S. to survive, though the opportunity to single out arms and legs, and thus reduce an enemy's accuracy or movement speed, isn't to be sneezed at.

Fallout has never seemed more assured as a first-person shooter. The guns, which range from quaint handfuls of wood and wire to sleek plastic energy weapons, are lovingly modelled and animated. You'll

"ALL FALLOUTS DEAL WITH THE COLLAPSE OF SOCIETY. THIS ONE LETS YOU START AFRESH."

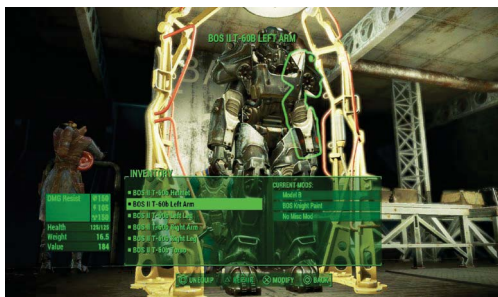
Below What's that? Everything is awesome?



Join the Brotherhood of Steel, and you'll get to live on an airship. Not too shabby.



Right Power Armour components can be upgraded, but you'll need Fusion Cores.



Left Once your critical attack bar is full, you can execute it whenever you please.

often use V.A.T.S. and Call of Duty-esque tactics in tandem, of course, but there's a catch — the same Action Point pool that lets you perform V.A.T.S. attacks is also drained when you sprint, or hold your breath to steady a scope. Is it worth galloping down the flank and rinsing that Synth the old-fashioned way? Or should you try for a slow-mo targeted shot from afar? It's a great elaboration on the whole of Fallout 3's already-celebrated approach, at once smart and cinematic.

If the gunplay has evolved, the quest design has lagged behind. Perhaps appropriately, Fallout 4 often feels like a game from the past. It's not just that the textures and animations look primitive next to, say, Bloodborne — the paths you can take through scenarios are entertaining but ultimately very familiar (and dependent, naturally, on which character stats you choose to improve). Sometimes you'll sneak through positions, disabling landmines while angling for a backstab. Sometimes you'll hack terminals to disable turrets or robot defences — some of the old military structures are manned by

Protections, which can be reprogrammed with different combat behaviours. Sometimes you'll pick a lock to open up a side-route, getting the drop on the area boss without rousing his minions. And sometimes you'll win some key NPC around in conversation, skipping the chaos entirely.

RAD MAX

Dialogue paths are just as predictable, though the writing itself has moments of verve — my highlights include the femme fatale robot vendor (hack her terminal for grim yet chuckle-worthy insights on the neighbourhood) and Strong, the Super Mutant on a mission to drink the "milk of human kindness," based on a somewhat literal reading of Macbeth.

Usually, your contributions to the chinwag come down to the choice between random sarcasm, playing the goody-two-shoes or refusing to take sides. It holds up well enough

— there are times when picking the right response can save you a whole heap of trouble — but it can seem backward when placed alongside the more nuanced writing of The Witcher 3, in particular.

The script's ups and downs aside, Bethesda's overall approach to open-world narrative could use a rethink. It's sometimes claimed that the studio's penchant for text artefacts such as intercepted notes is a lacklustre way to tell a story — you might as well just read a Wiki entry, right? But I don't think that's quite fair. There's no reason why pausing to skim an old diary can't be compelling, providing this is positioned as a plausible activity in the context, and many of the scraps you'll dig up in Fallout 4 are certainly worth savouring: the best of them help flesh out your understanding of an area's history without simply serving as a blurb.

"FOR THOSE WHO FALL IN LOVE, FALLOUT 4 IS FIT TO SHARE A VAULT WITH."



Above The world looks dinky on a PipBoy screen, but it's a match for Skyrim.



Right The interiors are stunning, despite some rough textures.



Above 'Legendary' enemies take some beating, but carry unique weapons.



But the exposition is often rather heavy-handed. A fair few of the terminal logs are barefaced hints about the location of tasty items. There are monologues penned by hardened criminals you really can't imagine any sane individual writing. Sometimes, reading a document will add a waypoint to your map in a way that doesn't quite add up.

It's the hallmark, again, of an RPG that hasn't quite kept up with the march of time. Rather than iterating upon its own, well-worn narrative strategies, Bethesda would do well to heed the lessons of videogames such as *The Vanishing Of Ethan Carter*, *Ether One* or the more recent *SOMA*.

WASTELAND WOES

You could argue that there's room for another strait-laced genre piece, especially when it's as huge and opulent as *Fallout* undoubtedly is. And you'd have a point. For those who

fall in love, *Fallout 4* is a game fit to spend a nuclear winter with – the Boston wasteland is absolutely saturated with things to do and discover, even for those who resist the temptation to colonise the place. No previous Bethesda RPG comes close in terms of the ability to customise a playstyle.

Execution, however, is important. It matters as much as size, or how many mission options there are. In terms of the blow by blow, *Fallout 4*'s over-emphasis on loot, technical blemishes, uneven narrative and rote mission design hold back Bethesda's latest. If only by a little.

VERDICT

A strong return for the franchise, boasting incredible customisation, a fascinating world and brutal yet brainy shooting, slightly tarnished by lacklustre AI and tedious inventory management.

Edwin Evans-Thirlwell

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... *FALLOUT 4*



FRIENDS & ENEMIES



Affable cyborg with the memories of a noir detective.

A righteous fanatic and member of the Brotherhood of Steel.

Burrowing menace with a poison sting, usually in highly radioactive areas.

HOW TO... *BECOME A WASTELAND MAYOR*



1 You can only build inside the green area. Start by dismantling anything that's highlighted yellow, but consider reusing green items to save resources, and be sure to dump all of your inventory junk at the workshop. **2** Snapping together parts can be tricky. Try rotating objects slowly, or using assets from the same 'families' – don't mix and match. **3** Crops will need to be tended before they can start generating food. Don't forget to assign the relevant jobs to your settlers.

IS IT BETTER THAN?



YES

Fallout 4's customisation elements are richer, plus we'll take V.A.T.S. over axe-flailing.



NO

Inquisition wins it for me thanks to great squad tactics and cast, plus grand empire management.



YES

It's close. *Fallout*'s script and characters aren't as clever, but its combat and quest mechanics are better.

SECOND OPINION *WASTELAND DWELLER*



It's a bit massive, isn't it? I've barely had a chance to really dig into the Commonwealth, but it already feels like Bethesda's tweaks will see me losing Christmas to its latest irradiated playground. It now feels like you're firing guns, rather than pea-shooters, and having a canine companion should become a prerequisite for all games.

Ben Tyrer

INFO FORMAT PS4 ALSO ON PS3 ETA OUT NOW
PUB TELLTALE GAMES DEV TELLTALE GAMES



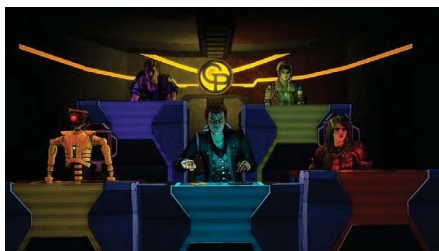
TALES FROM THE BORDERLANDS EP 5: THE VAULT OF THE TRAVELER

Ending with a bang? Try 'many'...

As expected from a game featuring space cowboys, con artists, neon, explosions, robots and explosions,¹ the final episode of Tales From The Borderlands ends the series with style. Although The Vault Of The Traveler misses a few beats by opting for crowd-pleasing rather than truly effective plot points, it's got great set-pieces and quality comedy.

What happened to unlikely teammates Rhys and Fiona when they tried to track down a vault is finally revealed; there's a showdown with Handsome Jack; there's betrayal... and did I mention the explosions? We're brought up to present-day Pandora, and there are heartwarming scenes as you bring the whole gang back together again. You get to compile a crack team from characters you met on your adventure,² but whether they'll help you depends on the choices you've made in previous episodes, proving Telltale really does play the long game. No matter who you go with, your squad is adept at silly badassery - battling a giant monster in a fight that borrows more from the Power Rangers show than anyone could have reasonably expected.

It's the ability to capture the real spirit of Borderlands that's made this series such a joy, and rarely has a game balanced comedy so well. While the choice of feel-good fun over emotion undercuts some powerful scenes, The Vault is the cherry on the top of a TNT trifle. Which, given the source material, could be either metaphorical or literal dynamite. **Alice Bell**



FOOTNOTES 1 There's also redemption, guns, explosions, aliens, romance, secret identities and explosions thrown in. 2 This series was always at its best with its characters interacting.

INFO FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW
PUB GROUND SHATTER DEV GROUND SHATTER



SKYSCRAPPERS

Never gets off the ground

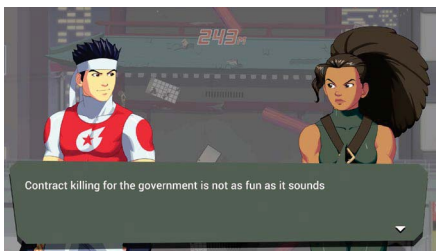
Simplicity is the hallmark of great couchplay. Mechanics that are instantly understandable for even your most game-averse mate, while hiding a ton of depth to keep it on constant rotation. SkyScrapppers aims for that goal, but never comes close to achieving it.

A hybrid platformer/fighter, the general idea is that you and three others must get to the top of a collapsing building or defeat your rivals with good ol'-fashioned violence. While there's a single-player mode,¹ it's been clearly designed with friends on the sofa in mind. The main problem is that neither the combat nor the platforming work well enough separately, let alone together.

The fighting tries to be basic - it's just **□** or **○** to attack - with an emphasis on using the environment to add depth to the mechanics. For instance, you can smash falling debris into opponents or use a Ground Pound attack when landing to send out shockwaves. But when there are four players scrambling around the screen, there are so many distractions that it becomes too chaotic to make out what's going on.

The platforming fares a little better and is SkyScrapppers' surest part, even if building up momentum and hurtling upwards isn't exactly knockout fun. With no set level paths to follow, your debris-hopping is partly down to luck, and it isn't uncommon to run out of stuff to jump on, killing the speed, the fun and any point of playing the game.

With neither the distinctiveness nor the depth of its multiple PS4 couchplay peers, and with too much going on on-screen, but not nearly enough to be invested in, this scrappy outing has little to offer apart from easy trophies.² **Ben Tyrer**



FOOTNOTES 1 There are four character stories, but no difference in the stages or feel of the players. 2 I'm not kidding - few games are as generous. I unlocked its platinum in under three hours.

INFO FORMAT PS4 ALSO ON PS3/PS VITA ETA OUT NOW
PUB BIGBEN INTERACTIVE DEV KYLOTONN GAMES



WRC 5

Rally round, race fans

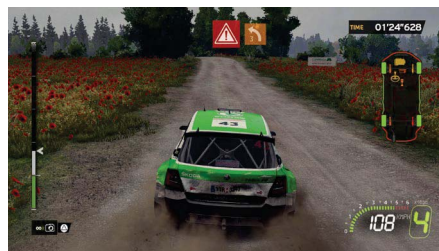
Driveclub aside, the current-gen roster of racers is relatively weak, meaning a revitalised WRC series revs onto the PS4 grid with a shot at the podium. But with French dev Kylotonn taking the wheel for the first time, this rally sim doesn't quite have enough in the tank to pull off the victory.

WRC fans will certainly be content to see no corners cut when it comes to the 2015 season - all the courses, drivers and cars are featured. Indeed, with more than 350km of trail across the 13 rallies' 65 stages, there's plenty of scope for replayability, especially once you've thrown in multiple weather variations and times of day or night.

Handling, of course, is key, and it's an area in which WRC 5 impresses. Pitched as an approachable sim,¹ the more difficult settings are pleasingly frustrating once you've torn through the basic rookie settings. It's important to get there as soon as possible, as playing WRC 5 with its baby settings on is to do it a disservice.

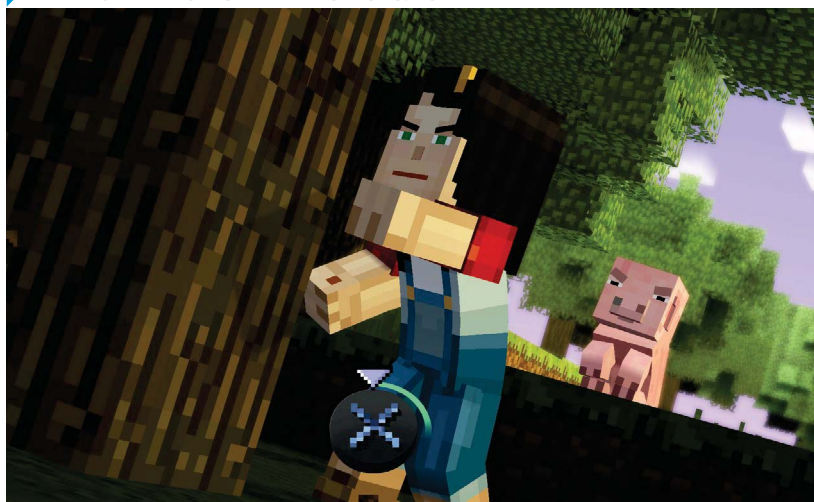
A stripped-back career mode gets the basics right, with non-racing elements now largely limited to choosing repairs.² The problems come with the more technical aspects. Graphical detail is far from championship material, collisions are inconsistent and the audio leaves much to be desired. A couple of aptly out-of-place "that was dodgy" comments from your co-driver will have you swerving for the nearest tree stump, while a busted gearbox sounds like you have a drumkit of hubcaps for company.

But that all feels strangely suitable for WRC - rough around the edges, yet with plenty of fun to be had thrashing Citroëns through Finnish forests in the middle of the night. **Andrew Westbrook**



FOOTNOTES 1 Hardcore sim fans may find WRC 5's more arcade leanings a little too 'approachable'. 2 Make your gearbox a priority - being limited to three gears and no reverse becomes dull, fast.

INFO FORMAT PS4 ALSO ON PS VITA ETA OUT NOW
PUB TELLTALE GAMES DEV TELLTALE GAMES/MOJANG



**THIS MONTH
ON PS PLUS**



@itsJenSim

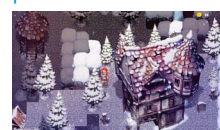
'Twas the month before Christmas, and all through the house, not a controller was stirring, not even a thumbstick... Yeah, not likely! It might be a silent night for everyone else, but November's PS Plus lineup is pulling no punches. Lights, cameras and more action than you can shake a zombie-snuffing sledgehammer at – and it's all free for those on Santa's PS Plus nice list.



First, make it an undead Christmas with interactive narrative adventure

THE WALKING DEAD SEASON 2 on PS4 (after you've picked up Season 1 for a steal on the store, natch). Nothing says Chrimbo like sobbing as zombies make mincemeat from your favourite characters, right? Unconvinced? Well, a bit of festive magic isn't far off, thanks to **MAGICKA 2**. Mash manic combos to cast spells, vanquish foes and solve puzzles. Co-op is even more madcap, where electrocuting your chum is an occupational hazard.

Probably best to be more careful around the volatile Commander Shepard in **MASS EFFECT 2**. It's free on PS3, so there's no better time to spin that dialogue wheel and blast those Reapers. And if you're still drooling over Sony's WiLD demo from Paris Games Week (more next issue!), try Michel Ancel's **BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL**. You play as daredevil reporter Jade, snapping photos and alien necks with equal gusto.



The hardcore heroines don't end there: **DRAGON FIN**

SOUP's alcoholic bounty hunter Red Robin brings her twisted brand of tactical fairytale combat to PS4, PS3 and PS Vita. You can take the renegade roguelike RPG on the go with cross-buy, keeping your new PS Vita copy of **INVIZIMALS** company. Venture into the snow with your PS Vita's camera to seek out and battle creatures, screaming "Merry Christmas, ya filthy animals!" during conflict.

NETHER'S BEEN BETTER

@itsJenSim

MINECRAFT STORY MODE: EPISODE 1

Pre-school story, bro

Welcome to the under the world as we know it. *Minecraft* Story Mode reinvents everyone's favourite freeform blockbuster, compacting it into a narrative-driven chunk. Episode 1, *The Order Of The Stone*, is built on franchise favourites and a choice-dependent narrative structure – but the cracks are already showing, and Telltale's showpiece is in danger of being condemned.

Little wonder. Think about what makes *Minecraft*, well, *Minecraft*: engineering impossible structures, conquering territory, the struggle to stay alive in a minefield of mobs. Now picture a *Minecraft* game without any scope for shenanigans. Doesn't it seem... wrong?

While Telltale Games (spinner of yarns, destroyer of feels, praise be unto them) harbours noble intentions in its attempt to narrativise *Minecraft*, it's not exactly endearing itself to the fanbase. Story Mode is primarily aimed at kids, but *Minecraft* spawn aren't your average ankle-biters. Mini-redstone moguls are unlikely to be impressed when the game hands them a crafting manual, or asks them to "mash  to build the thing."

There's not a lot for crumbly OPM old-timers, either. The plot clunks along, occasionally jarred by the bumps of juvenile jokes, bad mouth animations and janky real-time combat. Fetch quests? Puzzles? You could call them that – in the same sense you'd deem brushing your teeth a challenge.

TELLTALE SIGNS

Dial an ambulance, however, because there's life in the new dog yet. Episode 1 has a pulse. Well-written characters, dynamic relationships and appropriate yet complex moral choices will resonate with the younger demographic. As an older gamer [Ha! – Ed], I adore the Rocky-esque QTE montage and Heavy Rain references.

Whether the following episodes will stack up remains to be seen. This first chapter aims for the twin targets of big kid/small kid, ultimately missing both. Perhaps Pixar-perfect pitch is too much to hope for – but *Minecraft* deserves it. For now, Telltale's team hasn't yet nailed its ambitious blueprints.

Below You play as Jesse, the hero (or heroine). Your choices will dictate where you explore in future episodes.



VERDICT

A decent new adventure experience for kids, and an enjoyable side-note for adults. It's a starting block, but while it's not made of dirt, it's a way off gold. **Jen Simpkins**

12
www.pegi.info

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PS4™



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network

online dlc movies music how to trophies



online tests

98

Metal Gear Online

The Phantom Pain tops our PS4 Hall Of Fame, but is Snake's final online sneak up to scratch?



this month



on the store

100 The Crew - Wild Run

Trick out PS4's open-world, always-online racing game The Crew with souped-up DLC. Motorbikes, monster trucks and new modes. Hells yeah.



on your xmb

102 MI - Rogue Nation

Cruise is back as Ethan Hunt for a fifth time, with the globetrotting spy series showing no sign of slowing.



music

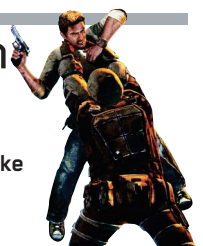
103 This month's hottest tunes

how to...

104 Create the Tearaway cast

platinum club

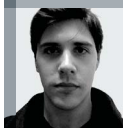
105 Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection



online tests

MULTIPLAYER MODES PUT THROUGH THEIR PACES BY OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING NOW



FIFA 16

Ben Griffin gets angrier than ever at the trials of creating his Ultimate Team



Usually, I set the difficulty in sports games on easy so I can feel good about myself, but during a round of FUT Draft, in which you pay about three quid to square off against the computer and win players for your Ultimate Team, AI opponents seem omniscient, splitting my defence with unnatural precision. After nearly bursting a blood vessel, I discover I've set them on legendary difficulty. Enraged by EA's infallible army, I head offline, select Barcelona, and thrash Doncaster mercilessly instead. That'll teach FIFA.



ROCKET LEAGUE

Ben Tyrer feels the personal sting of post-duel criticism



Playing the same opponent back to back in a ranked 1v1 lets me see both sides of the sporting coin. I'm crushed in the first game, ending with the usual "gg" pleasantries. But to my surprise and horror, we match up again immediately. This time, I take an unassailable lead. Instead of the quick "gg," however, I'm treated to some tasty Portuguese insults with "lucky" and "noob" as bookends. Could have been worse, they could have rage quit.



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT BETA

Jen Simpkins is firing in Hoth's icy tundra



Normally, I'm chewing my lip to a bloody pulp when playing an FPS. The Star Wars Battlefront Beta is a different kettle of space slugs; I'm far too busy mimicking the sound of my blaster rifle and singing along to The Imperial March. Shooting from the hip like a lustrous plastoid Clint Eastwood, I snatch up a Hero token and I'm suddenly sashaying along as Lord Vader, belting out, "You can tell by the way I use my walk, I'm the Empire's man." Stayin' alive is notably harder as Rebel scum, so I'll stick to the Sith.

REVIEW



INFO

FORMAT PS4/PS3
PUB KONAMI
DEV KONAMI LA STUDIOS
REVIEW ISSUE #114, 10/10

Metal Gear Online

Big Boss blows his shot at multiplayer magic

So this is it: possibly the last time Snake will ever grace PlayStation in any meaningful way. Thanks to publisher Konami getting a crush on the mobile market and seemingly jettisoning any intentions of ever making another triple-A game, Metal Gear Online feels like the legendary stealth series' final sneaky salute. Pity it's not very good then. Say it ain't so, Snake.

After you download a 960MB patch to gain access to MGS V's online component, multiple issues quickly surface. Distracting framerate drops whenever the hectic 16-player action gets frenzied. Wonky hit detection. Horrible lag that often sees enemies zip out of shooting range, as if blessed with Quiet's cheaty teleporting tricks.

Oh yeah, and a total lack of a host migration feature – meaning that if the host player quits, everyone gets booted back to their Freeplay character hub.

That last one really is a shocking omission for an online experience in 2015. When you add all these technical hitches up, MGO currently has more problems than serial IBS sufferer Johnny Sasaki after a night on the prunes.

It all feels just a little barebones, too. Like The Phantom Pain getting its final mission cut, there's a sense of a rushed hand prevailing. Aside from the tech woes, the game

feels unambitious at a base level. With only three character types and three different modes, there's not much meat on this PSN python's bones. Worse, two of the match types feel depressingly generic, despite enemy-luring wolf plushies and pilotable Walker Gears.

Comm Control is just a base mode where the attacking side has to capture three intel points

THE DUMB, HAPHAZARD SHOOTING LACKS THE TACTICAL NOUS OF TPP'S CEREBRAL CAMPAIGN.

CLASS IT UP

Once you pick a character, you're stuck with them. To play as a different class, you have to unlock additional character slots; something that doesn't open up until you hit Level 6.



The glitch-ridden, unambitious Metal Gear Online leaves us cowering for cover.



Skylanders SuperChargers

The series' online debut's off to a practice lap start

INFO

FORMAT PS4/PS3
PUB ACTIVISION
DEV VICARIOUS VISIONS
REVIEW ISSUE #116, 8/10

Are years of waiting for a decent PlayStation multiplayer karting game at an end? Not quite. Skylanders SuperChargers gets two big thumbs up for its online campaign and racing modes – non-local multiplayer is a long-overdue addition to the series – but the latter feature isn't exactly the Crash Team Racing-beater it could have been. Online race options are quite barebones: you simply plonk your vehicle and Skylander of choice onto the Portal to decide whether you'll be racing in a land, sea or air party and, well, that's about it. Four-player tussles – with a further four AI racers joining the battle – are available if you can find enough players online, but the driving's a touch too slow to feel truly competitive.

VERDICT

Basic but effective offering that's short on extra features. Online play's a nice bonus for the series, but don't expect it to be PS4's Mario Kart. **Matthew Pellett**

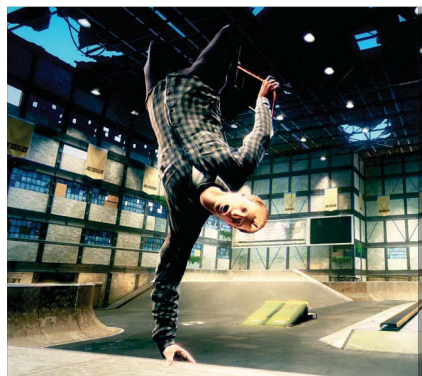
099

to win. Bounty Hunter, meanwhile, is a vanilla team deathmatch, where both sides run about killing or Fultoning away players. The dumb, haphazard shooting completely lacks the tactical nous so ingrained in every fabric of MGS V's terrifically cerebral campaign. Stealth is almost totally off the menu, with red markers giving away enemy players' positions at damn near every juncture.

Thankfully, there is a saving grace. Unlike the other two modes, Cloak And Dagger puts the emphasis squarely on the sneaky stuff. While the defending team tries to stop three data disks from being stolen, the attackers can indulge in all sorts of predatory shenanigans thanks to their invisible stealth camo. Here, the true cat-and-mouse espionage so central to Metal Gear's appeal shines through. Yet sadly, one engaging mode does not an enduring online game make.

VERDICT

Unpolished and blighted by glitches, MGO does its damndest to blast some enjoyable stealth in the foot by favouring overly generic gunplay. It deserved better. **Dave Meikleham**



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5

The Birdman's latest can't even take off

INFO

FORMAT PS4/PS3
PUB ACTIVISION
DEV ROBOMODO
REVIEW ISSUE #116, 3/10

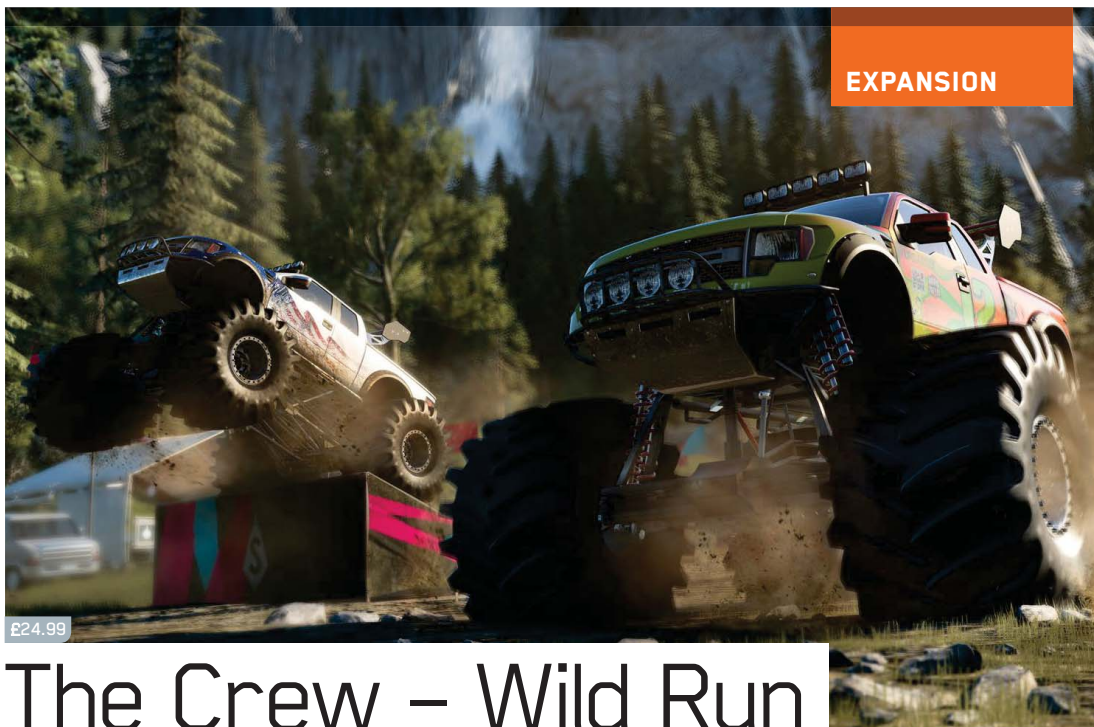
Hello? Is anyone actually out there in the cel-shaded lands of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5? Anyone? I can see people drifting through the online levels, but every time I try and get them to join me in a quick head-to-head, I'm left staring at an empty level. While there might be five modes for people to endure (yes, *endure*, there's no enjoyment to be had here), I've only managed to play a single game of Deathmatch, where you're left spitting out dodgeballs via flip-tricks, which is as clunky and ill-suited to a skating game as it sounds. This might have been avoided had there been a lobby system, but instead you're forced to try and start online matches from the level you're in. And of course, the skating is still dreadful. Just don't even think about it...

VERDICT

A variety of nonsensical and baffling barriers makes finding people an unbearable chore, but would you actually want to play this mess? **Ben Tyrer**

on the store

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DOWNLOADABLE DIVERSIONS



EXPANSION

£24.99

The Crew – Wild Run

Get trucked with the online racer's monster expansion

Petrolheads unite in Ubisoft's always-online racing sim The Crew, and the game's new DLC revels in this. Wild Run arrives with multiplayer mode The Summit firmly in tow, along with some shiny new toys and a bright visual overhaul to match the outlandish theming. Motorcycles, dragsters and monster trucks are getting hearts thumping and rubber burning, while a drift spec finally slides into the game.

The Summit, then: it's a monthly tournament made up of PvP and PvE challenges that you need to earn your way into (or buy a ticket with in-game cash). It brings players together in a celebration of car culture, offering the chance to showboat motors and win new rides. And what an array of rides.

Not content with the mundanity of four wheels, Wild Run pulls a Driveclub and introduces motorbikes, revving the engines of speed demons everywhere. It's also your ticket to kick up dust all over America in dragsters. Steady on, Hamilton hopefuls – only impeccable control will tame these beasts.

Restraint isn't exactly a thrilling prospect, so if you're not pumped up for Wild Run yet, take a look at the wheels on those monster trucks up top. Are they pumped up enough for you? It's not recommended driving for a cross-continent road trip, but monster trucks sure will make police chases interesting...

THE SUMMIT MULTIPLAYER MODE BRINGS PLAYERS TOGETHER IN A CELEBRATION OF CAR CULTURE.

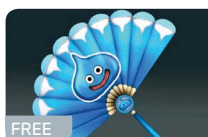
ALSO ON PSN



£1.69

THE DELOREAN

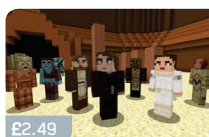
Flub a shot in Rocket League and you want to reverse time. The Back To The Future car pack can't quite help you with that, but it will definitely help you look awesome.



FREE

FANDANGOOS

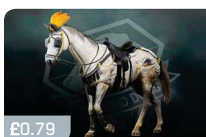
A slime-themed weapon for Dragon Quest Heroes: The World Tree's Woe And The Blight Below. Pick up this slippery fella for absolutely zilch with a PS Plus account.



£2.49

MINECRAFT: STAR WARS

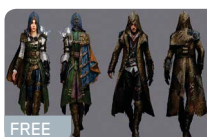
Boasting a host of characters, the skin pack has arrived in plenty of time for a very merry Star Wars Christmas. Looking stylish, you are.



£0.79

PARADE TACK

Quit horsin' around and add a touch of class and ceremony to your Metal Gear Solid V proceedings. PS Store is now selling fancy pony armour for pennies. Giddy-up.



FREE

ASSASSIN'S RAGS

Want to dress Syndicate's twins? Jacob channels Mary Shelley's monster in The Creature's Rags, and Evie rocks shocking steampunk with Dr Daniel's Garments.

DLC

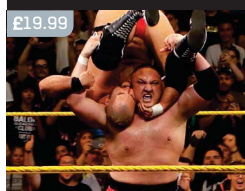
ETBC



BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT 'A FLIP OF A COIN'

A pleasant slice of Batman's mystery season pass content, this new story DLC sees Robin square off against Two Face and comes with two bonus AR Challenge Maps. Also this month: Catwoman's Revenge story pack.

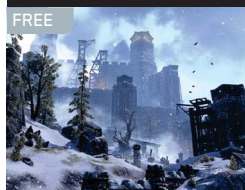
£19.99



WWE 2K16 SEASON PASS

30 new superstars (including the likes of Samoa Joe, Rowdy Roddy Piper and 2015's Hall Of Fame inductees), a seven-match Hall Of Fame showcase mode, more than 30 new moves and the annual Accelerator content unlock makes up this reasonably priced pack.

FREE



THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE: ORSINIUM

Orsinium has been a long time coming, and now TESO fans can make the orc city their own. Two new dungeons overflow with gear and loot for keen adventurers, but the really bloodthirsty can check out Maelstrom Arena for some Nord-on-Nord action.



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A PINT
OF BEER



A STEAK
PIE



1/3 OF A
CINEMA TICKET



A MAGAZINE



A FAST FOOD
MEAL



1/2 A CD

BLU-RAYS



Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation

Cruise control? More like fifth gear

As a man famous for doing his own death-defying stunts, Tom Cruise doesn't like making things easy. His latest Mission outing is no different, opening with the real Cruise hanging onto an Airbus A400M as it takes off – a stunt not unlike a certain Uncharted 3 scene. Rogue Nation never quite tops this incredible start, but it proves the series still has a plenty of life left.

The labyrinthine plot is driven by an organisation of assassins known as the Syndicate, who Hunt (Cruise) works to expose. Globetrotting from Vienna to an underwater vault in Morocco brings him into contact with femme fatale Ilsa Faust (Rebecca Ferguson), who's more than a match for the IMF man.

The twisty-turny script and lavish set-pieces are among the series' best, its Vienna sequence in particular being gloriously tense – Bond, by way of Hitchcock.

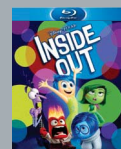
There's an over-reliance on Simon Pegg's comedy antics and it front-loads its best moments (the finale feels like an anti-climax), but Cruise has pulled off a real impossible mission – making the fifth film in a near 20-year-old series as strong as it is.

Jordan Farley



■ Cruise performed the plane stunt (including take off and landing) eight times.

COMING SOON



INSIDE OUT

23 NOV

Pixar journeys into the mind of an 11-year-old girl in this heartfelt coming-of-age animation that's reminiscent of classic Beano strip The Numskulls.



TED 2

23 NOV

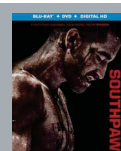
Seth MacFarlane's foul-mouthed sentient teddy and his thunder buddy Mark Wahlberg return to fight for Ted's civil right to be recognised as a person.



MAGGIE

23 NOV

Arnie does his best Joel from The Last Of Us impression in this downbeat undead drama, which sees his daughter infected with a slow-acting zombie virus.



SOUTHPAW

23 NOV

Electrifying within the ring, but melodramatic beyond the ropes, Gyllenhaal is a volatile fighter in this boxing drama from Kurt Sutter (Sons Of Anarchy).



MARVEL'S AGENT CARTER

30 NOV

Hayley Atwell's ace Peggy Carter gets her own '40s-set spin-off show full of intrigue and gender politics. Shuts on Agents Of SHIELD.



PIXELS

7 DEC

Adam Sandler's much-maligned arcade action comedy features dire dad jokes, but a mullet-sporting Peter Dinklage and a superb Pac-Man sequence.



ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING

7 DEC

Simon Pegg stars as a down-on-his-luck teacher gifted the power to do absolutely anything by four Monty Python-voiced aliens.



THE GIFT

7 DEC

Actor Joel Edgerton directs this thriller about a married couple whose lives are thrown into turmoil when a mysterious man enters their lives.



FEAR THE WALKING DEAD

7 DEC

The Walking Dead spin-off show is set during the opening days of the zombie outbreak and chronicles society's rapid collapse.



TRAINWRECK

7 DEC

Top comedienne Amy Schumer wrote this Judd Apatow comedy about a promiscuous magazine writer who falls for Bill Hader's mega-rich doctor.



Edgar Wright's original Ant-Man script was described as "Marvel's best" by Joss Whedon.

Ant-Man

Marvel's latest proves size matters

Arriving at the fag end of Phase Two and declared a lost cause after long-attached director Edgar Wright was unceremoniously jettisoned just weeks before filming began, Marvel's miniature hero was seemingly destined for a major failure. Happily, Ant-Man is the most refreshing Marvel movie since Iron Man.

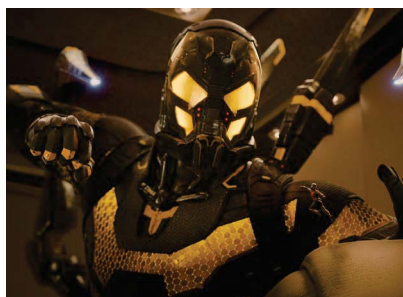
Paul Rudd stars as Scott Lang, an ex-con cat burglar who's enlisted by ageing scientist and original Avenger Hank Pym (Michael Douglas) to steal a piece of potentially dangerous technology from Pym's former partner Darren Cross (Corey Stoll). To pull off the heist, Lang has help in the shape of Pym's estranged daughter Hope (Evangeline Lilly), a size-altering suit and an army of ants, which he can control with his brain.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe has already proved surprisingly malleable and Ant-Man's breezy comic book caper stretches it even further. Rudd plays Lang straight, but the irreverent gags and Michael Peña's show-stealing goofball Luis keep the film consistently

fun. The inventive action also offers something new – microscopic scraps transitioning into full-on super-suit barneys in the blink of an eye. And how nice to have a Marvel film that isn't apocalyptic. At its heart, Ant-Man is about two fathers fighting for their daughters, and the emotional stakes are much higher as a result.

Despite attempts at justifying it in the plot, Hope feels sidelined and Darren Cross continues the tradition of duff Marvel villains, but these feel like minor quibbles.

With sequel Ant-Man And The Wasp due in 2018, and Lang set to appear in Captain America: Civil War, it seems Marvel's littlest hero is destined for big things. **Jordan Farley**



MUSIC



THE VACCINES GIVE ME A SIGN

FORMAT TRACK ETA OUT NOW PRICE £0.99

The arena-friendly UK rockers drop another single off their English Graffiti LP, complete with a great video that sees the song performed by a spoof band of spandex-clad Spinal Tap rockers called Wood! (their exclamation mark). thevaccines.com

PETITE MELLER BARBARIC

FORMAT TRACK ETA OUT NOW PRICE £0.99

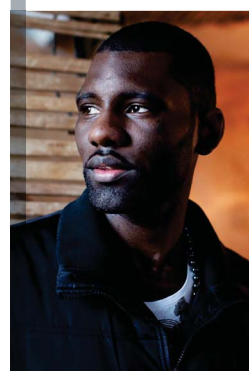
In her last video, Petite Meller fed tea to a giraffe. Now the rouge-smearing Parisian is back with a jaunty piano pop song, which finds her crooning about being "hungry for your skin." We're not sure whether we should be charmed, or slightly afraid. petitemeller.com



KURT COBAIN MONTAGE OF HECK: THE HOME RECORDINGS

FORMAT ALBUM ETA OUT NOW PRICE £12.99

A 31-track compilation of the grunge overlord's early takes on Nirvana songs, plus bizarre spoken word, tape collage and some tantalising track fragments. facebook.com/cobainmontageofheck



WRETCH 32 ALRIGHT WITH ME

FORMAT TRACK ETA 4 DEC PRICE £0.99

A teaser from next year's Growing Over Life finds Tottenham's finest jumping on a sunny beat with Rudimental collaborator Anne-Marie and PRGRSHN. It's as close to R&B as it is hip-hop, but what it lacks in grit and grime, it makes up for with the sort of sweet hooks you can whistle at the bus stop. wretch32.com

DOCTOR PLAYSTATION

Our console medic fixes your tech woes with actual science



THE PROBLEM

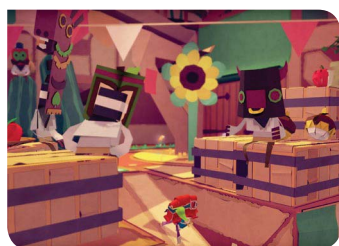
Lack of knick-knacks got you feeling lonely? Why not make your own Tearaway trophies? The Doc's got a black belt in papercraft, and will have you creasing up in no time.

Make the Tearaway cast

Get decorating with PlayStation's quirkiest characters

1

STEP 1
GATHER YOUR
PLANS FOR
PAPERCRAFT
DOMINATION



■ Sure, that PS4 trophy cabinet looks good on paper. But you know what else looks good on paper? Fabricated medical credentials... er, sorry, the loveable critters of platformer Tearaway, of course! Got your scrubs on? Let's get operating.

First off, boot up Tearaway on your PS Vita, or Tearaway Unfolded on your PS4. Snapping greyscale in-game objects will snag you the papercraft plans you need, so pull out your camera with **(A)** and press **(R1)** to take a picture. Log in to the tearaway.me site with your PSN ID, hover over your username, then select "Papercraft collection" to have a butcher's at the characters you can butcher. Choose a patient by clicking on them. When picking a print option, tick "Include instruction sheet" to ensure you get a line key. Then open up that PDF like a chest cavity.

2

STEP 2
PRINT PLANS
ONTO DECENT
CARD, THEN
CUT OUT

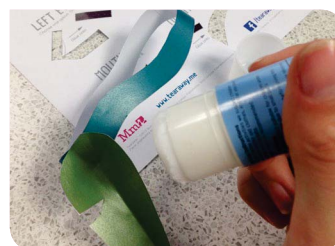


■ As my dealer loves to remind me, it's all about the supply. Thick paper or thin card is your best bet. So, if using paper, be sure to choose a thickness of 160gsm or above. What's that you say? You're feeding your printer 200gsm? You sexy, sexy maniac. The Doc likes your style. Next, simply open your desired PDF and print your model's plan into solid papery reality.

Cut it out! That's a phrase the Doc hears a lot of in the operating theatre – I must remember to up the anaesthetic more often. It's also your next step on your quest to crafting perfection. Take your craft knife, scissors or scalpel (if it's a surgical one like mine, give it a cursory rinse first – cleanliness is next to godliness) and slice that puppy open along the solid lines. Please don't jam anything sharp into your eyes/hands/appendages – you're ruining it for everyone.

3

STEP 3
SCORE, FOLD
AND STICK TO
ASSEMBLE
YOUR ARMY



■ The patient's in pieces. **DON'T PANIC!** (Where did you put that towel?) Squint through the blur of this morning's vodka and fold along the dotted lines, scoring them with a ruler for that neat edge. Take a look at the line key on the plan as this will indicate how to fold the various creases. Some folds will require 'mountain folds', where the fold is at the top and the paper slopes down on either side. Others will require 'valley folds', which is the opposite way up, in a V-shape. If this proves challenging, it might be a sign you require more vodka.

Now take a strong, all-purpose glue – yes, a regular glue stick will work on thinner paper, if you're that way inclined – and apply in a thin layer to your model's grey-shaded areas. Firmly hold any pieces that are being glued to each other. Breathe. Pray. All we can do now is wait...

THE VERDICT

We've got terrible news. You're going to die... of CUTENESS! The operation was successful – just look at that face. Pop that sucker on your desk, safe in the knowledge you definitely haven't created an unholy abomination.



NEXT MONTH

The Doc's back in surgery, showing how to build the perfect Fallout 4 base.



MR TROPHY

Iain Wilson's PSN ID is Wilbossman, and his trophy cabinet is bigger than yours.



Platinum x 64

Gold x 362

Silver x 1,412

Bronze x 5,882



Use cover as much as possible while tackling Crushing or Brutal difficulty to avoid being cut down in seconds.

Platinum Club

Triple platinum hunting in **Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection**

Trophy hunters have a treat in store with this collection, as it provides a separate set of awards for each game, meaning it's possible to net more than 150 trophies, including THREE platins. Many of these pots match up with their PS3 counterparts, with exceptions mainly for online trophies (as those modes aren't included) plus some that have been tweaked to make them harder.

This is most apparent in *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, where you must now rack up 250 *headshots* instead of the previous 100. You also need to kill 75 rather than 50 enemies in a row without dying for *Survivor* and melee kill 50 enemies from behind, instead of 20, to become a **Master Ninja**, but this actually just brings them into line with the subsequent two games.

There are some fresh additions, with each game rewarding you for entering the new Photo Mode for the first time, and you also have Speed Run challenges

for three different chapters in each title. Choosing to Practice Speed Run a section from chapter select puts a handy clock in the corner to keep track of your progress. Remember that many combat sections can be avoided by sprinting straight through.

On the surface, the fact that a difficulty level even harder than

Most of the remaining awards are cumulative, so unless you see the phrase 'in a row' as part of the description, you can use chapter select on easy difficulty to go back and farm the specific kills required until you reach your targets for each one.

There are more tricky 'DLC' trophies available for completing a

Continuous Speed Run of each game below a target time. Despite the name, this doesn't have to be done in a single sitting. Before attempting these runs, you should

unlock the Doughnut Drake costume, then have it equipped to earn the excellently named **The Fat and the Furious**, **Too Fat Too Furious**, and **The Fat and the Furious Yemen Drifter** pots after finishing each respective story.

Many of you will have already bested at least one *Uncharted* game, and thanks to the hardest new trophies being made optional extras, you should be able to bag three more platins without too many "oh crap" moments.

REMEMBER THAT MANY COMBAT SECTIONS CAN BE AVOIDED BY SPRINTING STRAIGHT THROUGH.

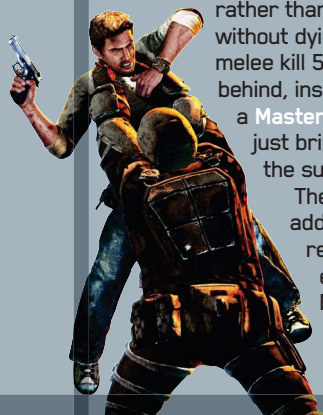
Crushing (aptly named Brutal) has been added sounds like terrible news. However, Naughty Dog has done us a solid by making the **Charted! - Brutal** accolades for defeating the games on this setting, along with several other tough objectives, appear as extra DLC trophies that aren't required to unlock the platins. Phew!

This means Crushing is now available from the start, so by completing your first playthroughs on this difficulty while grabbing all the collectable treasures, you can quite quickly unlock **Charted! - Crushing**, **Master Thief Collection** and all their preceding trophies.

NEXT ISSUE Mr Trophy explores his noir side to lead the team to platinum glory in *Call Of Duty: Black Ops III*.

JOIN THE CLUB

Hey! What's the hardest trophy you've snagged? Tell us at opm@futurenet.com



Rockstar's outlaw may look surly, but he's a real (admittedly quite murderous) sweetheart at his true core.



INFO

PUB ROCKSTAR GAMES

DEV ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO

RELEASED 2010, PS3
GET IT NOW AMAZON, £13.49

NEED TO KNOW

- 1 Rockstar San Diego started as Angel Studios.
- 2 John's voice actor, Rob Wiethoff, quit acting after RDR.
- 3 The game was made by 800 staff, and cost \$100m.

Outlaw & order

Every month we celebrate the most important, innovative or just plain great games from PlayStation's past. This time out, we pack our best chewing tobacco and get back in the saddle to remember Rockstar's wondrous Western...



Red Dead Redemption

Cowboys are cool. Everyone knows this. From the spaghetti sexiness of Sergio Leone to a moonwalking Marty McFly in *Back To The Future Part III*, the enduring appeal of the Old West has survived because it feels like mankind's last truly romantic era. Yet weirdly, games have all but ignored the appeal of the Western in favour of world wars or fantastical space adventures. Thank Clint Eastwood's filthy poncho for John Marston and Rockstar San Diego.

Red Dead Redemption wasn't the first PlayStation title to try and tame the Wild West – let's not forget its predecessor *Revolver* or Neversoft's underrated *Gun*. Crucially, its sandbox was the first to capture the expansive wonder of the frontier. Slo-mo duelling at dawn; side-quests revolving around herb-hunting and animal-skinning; saloon smackdowns – RDR is a triumphant checklist of every major Western trope. Set across two fictional US states and a fair slice of Mexico, Rockstar took GTA's exemplary world-

building, shoved a Stetson on its head, then saddled it onto the best horses this side of *Shadow Of The Colossus*.

RDR, however, is so much more than *Grand Theft Cowboy*. Sure, GTA and Red Dead share theft, thuggery and travelling from A to B (then blasting the hell out of everyone at B). But when it comes to storytelling, Marston's adventure is in a different stratosphere. Rockstar North may have cranked out criminal masterpiece after masterpiece, but it's Rockstar San Diego that spun gaming's first (and perhaps only) genuinely great open-world yarn. Aside from a brilliantly observed script, which combines the sombreness of *Unforgiven* with the wry playfulness of *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*, Red Dead's narrative success is all down to its conflicted outlaw.

JOHN MARSTON MAY BE THE MOST COMPELLING GAME CHARACTER EVER.

In John Marston, you may be looking at the most compelling, three-dimensional videogame character ever. *Really*. Cold yet courageous, pragmatic yet passionate, Marston is a complicated killer trying to balance the brutality of hunting down former gang members with the – wait for it – *redemption* that comes from trying to save his family. Vitally, he's a decent man, unshackled from the relentless cynicism of a GTA antihero, in a refreshingly sincere story.

Oh yeah, and the deserts are amazing. Prior to 2010, you'd never have thunk vast swathes of virtual sand could be so appealing. RDR's chunk of frontier real estate is breathtaking. Be it the barren beauty of Cholla Springs' lonely cacti or the iconic wonder of Alta Cabeza, rarely has a game captured such a beguiling sense of place.

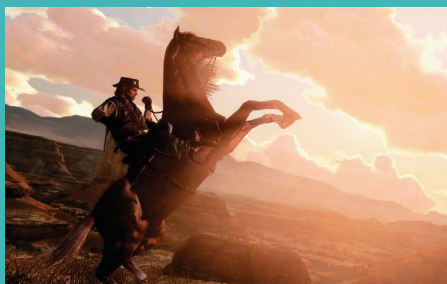
FAR, FAR AWAY

When the best moments hit, they eschew GTA's glorious chaos in favour of tapping into the sombre loneliness of the Old West. Riding into Mexico for the first time to the haunting melody of José González's *Far Away*. Those last three astonishing hours of quiet character building back at Marston's ranch. The 'secret' ending and its punchy, vengeful parting shot.

This is a game of bold storytelling and bolder moments. That, and some sodding great cover shooting. Will Red Dead Redemption 2 ever trot onto PS4's horizon? It's a near certainty, seeing as Mr Marston shifted 14 million copies. In the meantime, dust off that PS3 and remember a cowboy classic.



■ The New Austin plains seem to stretch on forever.



■ Making your horse rear up is always a pleasure.




■ Cougars, bears and wolves are all a toothy pain.

Name



that game

Guess the four games, and their scores, from these review quotes

 CREATE YOUR OWN FAN FICTION BY PUTTING DON DRAPER AND JOAN HOLLOWAY IN A PRETTY HOUSE, THEN MAKING THEM KISS. 

2 IT MIGHT BE DRESSED UP LIKE RESIDENT EVIL, BUT UNDERNEATH THE LEATHER JACKET IS A FAMILIAR, UNBEARABLY LOUD CARDIGAN.

3 FOREMAN-FRAZIER FEELS SPECIAL. VIVIAN HARRIS VS KERMIT CINTRÓN COULD JUST AS EASILY BE CALVIN HARRIS VS KERMIT THE FROG. 

4  TELL HIM THE DING DONG DELL ISN'T A PRISON. THEN LET BEWITCHING VISUALS, ACCESSIBILITY AND MR DRIPPY DO THE REST. 

ANSWERS

1 The Sims 3, issue #52, 8/10.
2 Shadows Of The Damned,
issue #60, 6/10.
3 Fight Night: Round 4, issue #34, 8/10.
4 N! No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch,
issue #80, 9/10.



OPM TIME MACHINE

5 YEARS AGO

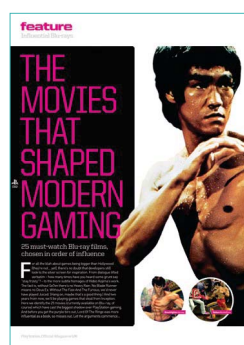
COD, Assassin's, Rock Band, Star Wars:
OPM #52's reviews section truly did get
its hits out for the lads (and lasses)...



Above The original Call Of Duty: Black Ops (9) fronted a blockbuster collection of reviews that also contained Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood (8), NFS: Hot Pursuit (9), Rock Band 3 (9) and The Force Unleashed II (er... 6).

Below left We covered the world-first hands-on with Gran Turismo 5. Verdict? Top, top, *top* gear.

Below right Also given a first play was THQ blaster Homefront. Our prediction? "Strong." Moving on...



Far left Aliens topped our list of the movies that shaped modern gaming. There's a good chance it still would now.

Left Seven new PS Move games get rated, ranging from mediocre (TV Superstars) to equally mediocre (The Fight).

DON'T MAKE ME PLAY! GRAND AGES: MEDIEVAL

Don't like it. Never tried it. Every month we force one of our team to play their most feared game



INFO

PUB KALYPSO
DEV GAMING MINDS
RELEASED 2015, PS4
GET IT NOW AMAZON,
£37.95



WHAT?

As an open-world, strategic civilisation builder, Grand Ages: Medieval is something that's never been seen before on PS4. Many RTS fans excitedly praise the depth of its gameplay and its 'universal appeal'. Promises, promises.

WHO?

If it moves any slower than a squirrel on Red Bull, Jen Simpkins isn't interested. She definitely doesn't have the attention span for an RTS ga-WAIT! WHAT'S THAT SHINY THING?!

PS4 is capable of miracles. It can create infinitely generated fantasy landscapes. It'll run lag-free online matches. Sometimes, it even presents interactive narrative experiences that melt my hard little heart. To use it to play a retro-tastic real-time empire budget simulator – even a new one – feels almost sacrilegious. Indeed, while loading Grand Ages: Medieval, I feel the immediate urge to shower.

Absentmindedly, I scrub at my skin as an unending slew of cutscenes preface campaign mode. Gameplay finally begins: the tedium unfolds. A tiny town lies at the mercy of my omnipotent thumbsticks. My pupils dilate, black with intent. In my haste to start a war with the neighbouring town of Budapest, I forget that this game is not about fun – it's about buying and selling coal.

I FORGET THIS GAME IS NOT ABOUT FUN – IT'S ABOUT BUYING COAL.

Fortunately, a smug pop-up appears to remind me. "No war, only coal," it says. "In order that you don't miss any important developments, please set the game speed to 0.1x." When I try to scream, no sound escapes my mouth.

Trapped in a baffling process of trading commodities, forced to wait until my village produces enough fruit for my dead dad (I don't understand either), I seek entertainment elsewhere. Perhaps a day-trip. The Mayoress of Constanta greets me by announcing, "I'm sure you'll be impressed by the size of our barracks." What did you just say to me, you little ambassador?! I go full Navy Seal cypasta rage on her, making an insultingly small offer of gold for her puny hovel. That'll teach her.

Fuming, I switch to an open game. My town expands, but my economy crashes, and borrowing cash isn't an option. A diplomat asks me to check out his "magnificent barracks." There is no escape. I continue to loathe RTS games. Even PS4 can't work some miracles.



■ Waving off my fleet has me shedding a maternal tear or two, but I spend the majority of my time staring at incomprehensible menu screens. It's some people's treasure, but my personal Kryptonite.

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO CURRENT-GEN'S GREATEST GAMES

PS4 HALL OF FAME



1



METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

Konami might try and scrub Hideo Kojima's name from the ultimate in tactical espionage action, but it'll never remove his fingerprints. While retaining that distinct storytelling and sense of wonder that defines an MGS title, MGS V offers a level of freedom and creativity unheard of in any sandbox. Grand, majestic and bittersweet, this is an instant classic.



2



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

Laughing in the face of other cross-gen ports, GTA V on PS4 is more than just a mere HD remaster. Upgraded to a glorious 1080p, it weaves everything that made the PS3 original great, with new music, more dynamic weather and a game-changing FPS mode.

3



BLOODBORNE

PS4's first truly great, entirely bespoke exclusive. With the finest third-person melee combat in all of gaming, drool-worthy art design and the most twisted monsters in the biz, this is a gorgeously Gothic must-have. Be warned: it's tough.

4

NEW!



DESTINY: THE TAKEN KING

The Taken King expansion means there's never been a better time to be a Destiny player – for veterans it's a giant vat of new content that'll keep you playing for months; for newcomers it offers the smoothest, most complete shooter a PS4 owner could wish for.

5



THE LAST OF US REMASTERED

This modern masterpiece just gets stronger with age, like a full-bodied stilton. A starkly brutal, emotionally honest take on the end of the world, Naughty Dog's stealth shooter is quite simply one of the best games ever, even if this PS4 port doesn't add much to it.

6



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

The White Wolf himself finally rides onto PS4 and brings with him one of the most diverse and challenging RPG worlds ever seen. Mesmerising to look at and utterly engrossing to play, CD Projekt RED's farewell to Geralt is a new high for the genre.

7



DRIVECLUB

A coming together of fanatical graphical detail, a pleasing handling model and social features you'll actually appreciate. The competition isn't exactly fierce on PS4 for Evolution Studios' current-gen racer, but it crushes the rivals nonetheless.

8



ALIEN: ISOLATION

Explore Ridley Scott's original vision of a horrifying future in startling fidelity with an attention to detail that borders on the obsessive. It's time to remember what made the xenomorph so scary in the first place... and then get killed by it.

9



TOWERFALL ASCENSION

You haven't lived until you've enjoyed a four-player free-for-all in this instant couchplay classic. The solo campaign is fine by itself, but almost *nothing* beats the arrow-grabbing, death-defying last-second kills of local multiplayer's mayhem.

10



BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

Rocksteady sends the Bat out with a bang. A compelling, cathartic story adds new layers to the Dark Knight, while PS4 allows Gotham to blossom with a truly amazing engine. The stealth still sings, the fisticuffs are fab and the Batmobile is brill.

11

NEW!



UNCHARTED: THE NATHAN DRAKE COLLECTION

If you somehow missed the trilogy on PS3 then this excellent remaster should be your next purchase. Nathan Drake is PlayStation's biggest hero, and no PS4 owner should skip his collection.

12



MINECRAFT

Bigger, better and blockier than ever before on PlayStation, this iconic build-'em-up benefits massively from PS4's additional power and gives you a creative playground 36 times the size of that on PS3 in which to build. Or lob TNT around, if you want.

13



TEARAWAY UNFOLDED

Its handheld original is rightfully riding high in the PS Vita Hall Of Fame as its PS4 remake-of-sorts swoops onto the current-gen roster on a raft of new features. Media Molecule makes the most of all that extra power and strikes gold yet again.

14



RESOGUN

Capturing everything that made the shoot-'em ups of old so compelling and combining it with a sumptuous voxel-based visual presentation, Resogun should come with a health warning that reads: "This game will consume your every waking moment."

15



JOURNEY

In a gaming landscape dominated by mindless violence and blabbering idiots, this wordless walkabout stands tall in red robes. It's about joining an online stranger and going for a wander, exploring a beautiful sandy world together in quiet awe.

16

**UNTIL DAWN**

Once destined to live its life as a PS Move curio on PS3, Supermassive Games' ode to the teen slasher movie has emerged on PS4 with a rusty, bloody axe in one hand and a rather nasty looking set of consequence-based choices in the other.

17

**DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION**

Following closely on the action-RPG heels of Geralt of Rivia, Bioware's third trip to Thedas conjures something truly special. Improved combat; an ace cast of characters; a semi-open world full of emergent gameplay; an epic story. The list goes on.

18

**PES 2016**

Last year PES finally proved its worth with a FIFA-beating mixture of superior mechanics and slick gameplay. It does it again this year with a new sense of speed, versatility and physicality that's secured PES's place on the virtual footy throne.

19

**ROCKET LEAGUE**

From the ashes of an obscure PS3 curio that no one can recall comes a PSN sleeper hit so addictive it's probably illegal. With a toolled-up remote controlled car, a bootful of boost and a giant metal football, Rocket League is a slice of multiplayer heaven.

20

**THE BINDING OF ISAAC: REBIRTH**

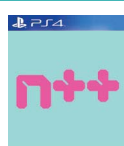
Who'd have thunk digital childhood trauma could be so entertaining? This ace procedurally generated dungeon crawler is fiendishly funny and scorchingly difficult. It also boasts a hugely endearing art style that only adds to its unique brand of grisly magic.

21

**FAR CRY 4**

So many eagles. Not the face! Ubisoft puts on one hell of a Really Wild Show in its frosty sandbox shooter. Often gorgeous, with an endlessly entertaining arsenal, there are few games on PS4 where it's this fun to aimlessly muck around.

22

**N++**

What happens when a stick ninja gets thrown into more than 2,000 colourful 2D levels and is told to dodge rockets and collect gold? You get one of the best games available on PSN - and an experience so tough it'd make Dark Souls weep.

23

**EVERYBODY'S GONE TO THE RAPTURE**

With nary a bullet, killstreak or XP-leveiling system in sight, developer The Chinese Room goes against the hyperactive grain and creates a stunningly rendered English village wrapped in a gently paced mystery.

24

NEW!

**SOMA**

It delivers fewer scares than expected, but this first-person underwater survival game weaves a fascinating yarn about the human mind. Plus it conjures up some moral choices that put the efforts of a certain other (PS3) watery FPS to shame...

25

**FINAL FANTASY XIV: A REALM REBORN**

It took three goes to finally make the FF MMO fans have always wanted, but A Realm Reborn is the one that nails it. The Heavensward expansion balloons its size, easily making it PS4's premier online world.

BUBBLING UNDER

Alternative picks

We dive into PS4's library for gold. This month: couchplay classics.

PICK #1**SPORTSFRIENDS**

Jen Simpkins' friends demand joustice for her crimes in the multiplayer medley

Now there's a problematic name. The games aren't really sports: BaraBariBall marries retro fighting and water polo; Super Pole Riders is pole vaulting with swordplay and zip-line Pong. And friends? Maybe not once you've spiked their 20th anniversary pad into the ground during a particularly violent JS Joust session. More like SmallClaimsCourtFriends...

PICK #2**PEGGLE 2**

PS4's cheeriest game turns all of Ben Tyrer's parties into battles royale

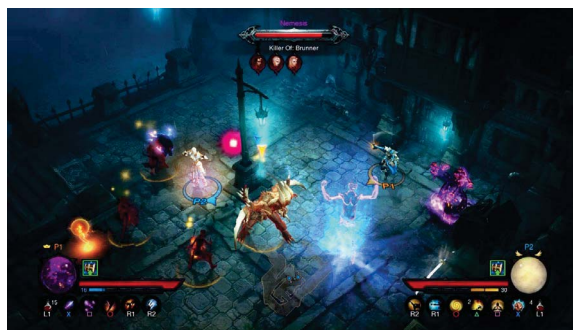
Peggle 2 is a cavalcade of fun. Retina-obliterating colours, gameplay that everyone can pick up and Ode To Joy is the level complete music. Need I say more? It transforms any multiplayer session into a pit of giggles. Just try to avoid grinning when fireworks announce your superiority over everyone who dared to take you on and... what do you mean, I'm taking it too seriously?

RETINA-OBLITERATING COLOURS, GAMEPLAY ANYONE CAN GRASP... PERFECT!

PICK #3**DIABLO III: ULTIMATE EVIL ED**

Matthew Pellett relives his PS2 Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance memories on PS4

As an 'Ultimate Evil Ed' myself, I can fully get behind any game that... oh, you mean 'Ed' is short for edition in the title? Never mind. Still, this former Hall Of Famer remains one of PS4's very best role-players. If you're after more substance from your couchplay shenanigans than the quick-fire competitive offerings of above, dungeon-crawling with friends in local co-op is for you.



Diablo III: Reaper Of Souls - Ultimate Evil Edition isn't for casual players, but grab three hardcore friends and you're set for weeks.

THE ESSENTIAL COLLECTION OF LAST-GEN CLASSICS

PS3 HALL OF FAME



1



THE LAST OF US

PS3's premier developer proves a misbehaving pooch can learn new tricks in this extraordinary adventure. In true Naughty Dog fashion, the Californian studio subverts everything from zombie and post-apocalyptic tropes to the gameplay beats of its own back catalogue. Effortlessly blending stealth, horror and action with a script destined to break your heart, TLOU is interactive storytelling at its finest.



2



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

The largest entry in the series is also one of the most ambitious games ever, but its fusion of thrilling missions, entertaining characters and scathing satire looks effortless. There can be no better way to bring a generation to a close than this.

3



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

The game that sparked a million mancrushes, with a perfectly pitched script, crunchy combat and set-pieces like no other. In three words: unprecedented, unequalled, Uncharted.

4



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

A near-perfect open-world fusion of engaging storytelling, truly compelling characters and a living environment ripe for experimentation. No sandbox since has got us quite so invested, and the bold ending still resonates to this day.

5



JOURNEY

This charming two-hour voyage crafts an incredible, immersive narrative and a genuine emotional connection using little more than near-silent figures, marvellous sand physics and floating pieces of cloth. A remarkable and unique experience.

6



MASS EFFECT 2

While Bioware's trilogy-ender sends Shepard out in fine style, it's the middle slice of the delicious sci-fi sandwich that remains its best. A brilliantly scripted action-RPG, the closing 'suicide mission' provides an incredible finale.

7



DARK SOULS

Akin to nothing else you've ever played (unless you've already played Demon's Souls). It may be as impenetrable as a vault in Fort Knox, but persevere and there's a brutal and beautiful challenge within that you will never, ever forget.

8



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

Simply the finest COD ever made. From *that* nuke to Captain Price's mesmerising ghillie suit stealth mission, few games can match Modern Warfare's thrilling scripted spectacle.

9



PORTAL 2

Only Valve could turn advanced physics, impossible puzzles and a voice cast comprised of a disembodied AI and Stephen Merchant into such a unique and undeniable work of genius. Hands down the funniest first-person experience on console.

10



METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

The most gleefully playful and imaginative stealth game on PS3. Whether you're watching a monkey slurp soda or revisiting the site of the PS1 original, no game honours its past so poignantly.

11



BIOSHOCK INFINITE

Perhaps the best narrative team of the entire generation brings one of its finest series to a staggering climax. The original game would be well deserving of a place, but the mind-boggling revelations here run a whole lot deeper.

12



BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

The most compelling bit of Bats action money can buy... that doesn't involve Heath Ledger's Joker. Thanks to an acutely detailed open-world chunk of Gotham, Rocksteady's classic just pips Arkham Asylum to this spot by the thinnest of bat-whiskers.

13



THE WALKING DEAD: SEASON ONE

Telltale has crafted some amazing stories, but the first season of The Walking Dead stands among the best downloadable games ever with emotional ties and tangible consequences for your actions.

14



HEAVY RAIN

From controversial purveyor of interactive cinema, David Cage, comes this psychological thriller that plays like no other game on the system (apart from Beyond: Two Souls, natch). A real masterpiece of twists, turns, cinematography and, uh: "JASON!"

15



LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

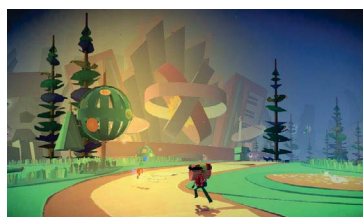
Media Molecule's second swing at the user-generated puzzle-platformer is even more essential than its predecessor, offering a raft of options so deep and rewarding the only thing holding you back are the limits of your imagination.

YOUR EVERY NEED FOR ON-THE-GO GOODNESS

PS VITA HALL OF FAME



1

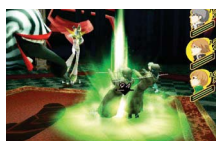


TEARAWAY

Peerless crafty platforming from Media Molecule, this time using PS Vita's raft of touchscreen/touchpad controls to surprise and delight you in new ways for hours on end. Full of whimsy, charm and enough personality to put most games to shame, Tearaway's papercraft world remains Vita's most vibrant title.



2



PERSONA 4: GOLDEN

This thoughtful and unique JRPG epic gives you another stab at high school – only this time with intrigue and superpowers instead of nerves, acne and an unpredictable vocal register.

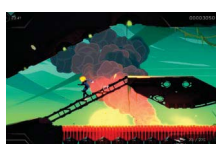
3



RAYMAN LEGENDS

Rather than losing its lustre on the move to PS Vita, Ray's second slice of sumptuous side-scrolling is even better on handheld. Touchscreen gestures make this fine platformer all the sweeter.

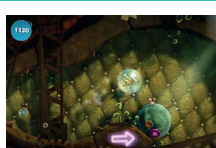
4



VELOCITY 2X

A ludicrously enjoyable puzzle/platformer hybrid that should come with a health warning. So joyous is the side-scroller's twin-stick teleporting, there's a danger you'll smile your face clean off the bone.

5

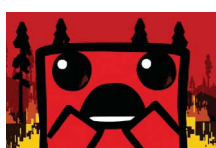


LITTLEBIGPLANET

Sackboy's back, smaller but just as lovable as ever. His platforming antics work perfectly on Vita, and the new control inputs complement the level creator brilliantly. Also: d'awwww.

6

NEW!



SUPER MEAT BOY!

The new music doesn't match up to the classic tunes, but Meat Boy's long-awaited PlayStation debut is the finest, fleshiest twitch platformer of all. An essential, thumb-destroying masterpiece.

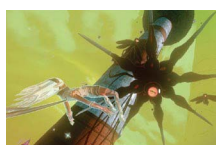
7



FINAL FANTASY X/X-2 HD REMASTER

Two examples of JRPG royalty, lovingly restored to their former glory for your portable pleasure. Their new touch controls are – gasp! – a welcome addition.

8



GRAVITY RUSH

Use a gravity-defying cat to break the laws of physics and zoom across the skies of a floating steampunk city. With stylish comic-book looks and a sassy heroine, this is a rush to remember.

9



METAL GEAR SOLID HD COLLECTION

Two of PlayStation's finest adventures scale down beautifully, with enough cutscenes to fill a transatlantic flight. Even less excuse not to play, then.

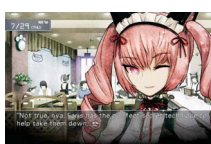
10



SPELUNKY

With more than a subtle nod of its fedora to a certain whip-wielding Dr Jones, Spelunky's procedurally generated dungeons and platformer/roguelike mashup shines brightest on PS Vita.

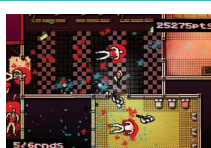
11



STEINS;GATE

This mind-bending, tongue-in-cheek visual novel takes something as simple as a mobile phone and turns it into a time-travelling extravaganza that's fit to bursting with comedy and drama.

12



HOTLINE MIAMI

Part puzzler, part top-down murder-'em-up that's as brutal as almost anything else on PlayStation. It's hard but never frustrating, with instant restarts and lightning-fast gameplay.

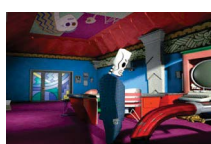
13



UNCHARTED: GOLDEN ABYSS

Drake proves he's just as adept at adventuring on the go. A prequel story plump with classic jungle action, and crammed full of typical Uncharted charm.

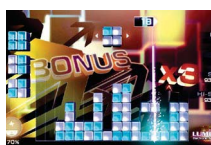
14



GRIM FANDANGO

An example of genuinely timeless storytelling finally arrives on PlayStation. Double Fine's deft touch-up retains the old-school adventuring for a new generation to savour and enjoy.

15



LUMINES: ELECTRONIC SYMPHONY

Part block puzzler, part mobile disco, this is as certain to have you nodding along to ace choonage as it is to keep you returning for more reflex-testing action.



No.33

Kicking up a sphinc'

Cleaning up Dead Space, one anus at a time

 **FORMAT** PS3 / **PUB** EA / **DEV** EA REDWOOD SHORES / **RELEASED** 2008 / **SCORE** 8/10

Last
Month

**Star Wars
The Force
Unleashed**
Bringing down
one of the
Empire's
crafts with
space
magic.

Okay, 'fess up people. Which one of you thought it would be smart to feed the USG Ishimura's AI module the vindaloo last night? We can only assume that's what happened, because right now the ship's squeezing hot death straight out of its starfish airlock.

Dead Space remains one of PS3's very best horror experiences, but while it does jumpy Necromorphs-in-the-face action exceedingly well, its defining moment of pure, unfiltered awfulness comes halfway through the game at the end of chapter six.

Protagonist Isaac is exhausted from wiping up the sticky mess in the Hydroponics Lab, and wants nothing more than a calming bath to unwind. Instead, thanks to The Leviathan monster, he gets what is effectively a shower of stinking scat: the room-sized end of level boss is a puckering portal of poo, and our hero's missing the bogbrush he badly needs to rectify the rectal ruination.

So what's a space mechanic to do when he's caught short and somebody's forgotten to renew the Andrex supply? Why, it's time to slice off The Leviathan's

explosive haemorrhoids and TK-fling them into the maw that is the boss' crinkling cornhole. The ship's doctor is in town, and he's ordered an engineering enema.

Sure, the game's filled with great, isolated moments – many of them deserving of glory on this page – but it's The Leviathan's dribbling rusty sheriff's badge that continues to linger in our minds, much like the gut-churning odour that never seems to leave the OPM Towers' gents. Dead Space's memorable encounter may only be one small step for man, but it's one giant seep for arse-kind. ■

Next
Month

Fallout 3
Wiping an
entire town off
the map with
a treacherous
spot of bomb
tinkering. You
scumbag,
you. Boo.

A detailed illustration of the character Ryu from the Street Fighter V video game. He is shown from the chest up, wearing his signature red headband and large red boxing gloves. His expression is intense and focused, with his eyes fixed forward. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

NEXT
MONTH

PlayStation®
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2016 PS4
CALENDAR

PS4'S BEST YEAR YET

Street Fighter V throws the first punch in your complete guide to 2016

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